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CONSTANTINE FEDIN

NO ORDINARY SUMMER

No Ordinary Summer *is the second book of a trilogy which began with* First Joys (*See* International Literature *No. 10, 1945*). *Constantine Fedin is still working on the novel of which this is only the first part: the remainder of the novel will be published in future numbers of our magazine as it appears in Russian.*

The general upheaval, the rise or collapse of the human spirit, are not the only concomitants of great historical events: invariably they are accompanied by sufferings far from the ordinary and by privations that man cannot prevent. There are people who realize that the events constitute part of the general movement of history, or who themselves are consciously turning the wheels of history; this does not prevent their suffering, any more than pain ceases when the sick man knows the nature of the illness that causes it. Such a man, however, can stand up to suffering in a way quite different from one who does not ponder over the historical nature of events and who merely sees that life today is easier or harder, better or worse than it was yesterday or will be tomorrow. For the former, the logic of history gives suffering a meaning, while the latter regards suffering as something created merely that he might suffer, in the same way as he thinks he has been given life that he might live.

Vassili Danilovich Dibich, lieutenant of the tsarist army, was on his way home after internment in Germany; he was making for Khvalynsk, a little town, a district centre on the Volga. The exchange of prisoners between Germany and Soviet Russia had begun long before but Dibich was not included in a party for exchange despite his persistent efforts. After a second attempt to escape from a prison camp he had been interned in the old Saxon fortress of Koenigstein that had been converted into a disciplinary prison for allied officers who made repeated attempts at escape. Many years before Mikhail Bakunin, who had been arrested for the leading role he played in the 1849 insurrection in Dresden, had been imprisoned in Koenigstein. When the interned Russian officers were discussing the turbulence of the Russian character with some French officers, they recalled Bakunin's name and from these reminiscences acquired fresh strength to withstand the cruel regime invented by the Germans.

In the spring of 1919 Dibich was at last listed for despatch with an echelon leaving for Russia but he contracted dysentery, lay in hospital for a month and almost died of it. He was then attached to a party of sick soldiers that crossed Poland on a Red Cross train; he made the whole journey in a hanging cot, was passed through quarantine at Baranovichi and arrived in Smolensk scarcely able to drag his feet. He was kept in a Smolensk hospital for a week and then sent out into the wide world.

He found himself on the station in the middle of an impatient, milling crowd that seemed intent on nothing more than revolving its bags, bundles and other belongings around itself; quite unexpectedly Dibich smiled. He remembered how four years before he had left for the front, a healthy twenty-three-year-old second lieutenant; his comrades from the

university came to see him off and, as they embraced him in farewell, they said confidently: "We'll meet again soon, we'll meet again soon, after victory!" And this was the meeting; he was again on a Russian railway station that remotely reminded him of the one from which he had set out for the front. In his officer's greatcoat, crumpled from having been slept in, so greasy that it had lost its silver-grey colour, without his epaulettes, a green German rucksack wrinkled from constant soakings in the rain, slung over his shoulder, he was gaunt in appearance, with a sharp nose and red-rimmed eyes that were still sore from unhealed sties; his smile was shy and hurt for he saw that he was not needed by anybody in that crowd—a creature scarcely living, and, as he said to himself at that moment, alone and face to face with Russia.

The sharp edge of a soldier's field box caught him in the shoulder. Together with the pain of the blow he felt a persistent gnawing in the pit of his stomach, the constant and almost accustomed feeling of hunger that moaned like some stringed instrument and made his knees tremble; he walked away to the wall, threw off his rucksack, took out a hunk of pasty black bread that had been given him at the hospital, tore off a crust and began chewing it with rapid movements of the jaw, opening his mouth wide so that the bread wouldn't stick to his teeth.

From that day on Dibich began his journey eastwards to the centre of Russia, towards that huge wedge of black earth that he remembered from the journeys he had made to Moscow in his student days. Progress was slow, from one junction to another, in any of the tightly packed converted wagons that came along or in empty freight cars. The trains would suddenly be held up at some wayside halt and stay there night after night only to start off again just as suddenly without any explicable reason, and crawl slowly through fields and oak groves until the engine driver would announce that he no longer had a head of steam and needed firewood; then the passengers, cursing and fuming, would leave the train and make for the nearest woods to fell birch trees.

Dibich sat in the open doors of a freight car carelessly swinging his legs, clad in blue Austrian puttees, looking out on the land that was lazily floating past him: strips of ploughed earth giving way to black hamlets, steep railway embankments with a row of telegraph poles supported by props and lonely robins that sat singing on the sagging wires. It was his twenty-eighth spring and it brought him joy. He was so moved that he felt a lump rise in his throat when a strip of bright green autumn sown rye suddenly appeared bathed in the sun's rays as the train rounded a sharp bend. His glance drank in the flash of this joyous new-born colour and Dibich murmured some simple childish melody—something like "The two little birds came flying, two little tiny mites"—and kept looking and looking, never growing tired of it. In the woods and around the stumps of felled trees patches of green leaves just breaking out of the buds glistened in the sunlight. On the pastures—without a single flower in them—the brown and piebald, poorly-bred, fat-bellied peasant cows stood scattered about, their lowered heads tearing at the grass; small boys in long greatcoats that their fathers had brought back from the front sat in the sunlight and plaited stock whips, their heads in tattered sheepskin caps turning slowly to follow the movement of the train. Staggering slightly over the newly ploughed field beside a leaping harrow, a woman tugged at long reins and with a twig urged on a short-legged mare that walked as though it were toppling over. It was all so much like home, every detail was so familiar and at the same time so astounding that it seemed like a new discovery, unexpected and unbelievable. Everything all around was much poorer, more rickety, so much smaller than that which he had remembered of the pre-war past, but still it seemed all the closer to him and caused a sharp pain in his heart.

It was only at the stations that the joyous mood left him to make way for a restless bewilderment at the tormenting changes that transfixed the people, making them unrecognizable despite their homely surroundings. Jumping out of the cars the people crowded round a peasant woman who had brought some modest eatables to exchange for the still more modest riches of the soldiers and civilians—matches, salt,

lumps of dirty sugar that had wandered loose around pockets, torn packets of coarse tobacco. The barter amazed Dibich by the completely unaccustomed relations between values and prices, he still rated everything according to the value of peacetime kopeks and his mind simply refused to grasp the readiness with which a roast chicken was bartered for a handful of salt. Oh, well, to hell with this crazy economy!—the bad thing about it all was not the readiness with which they came to an agreement to equate the inequable—but no! The terrible thing was the odour of the market, the sight of a chicken's wing torn off with a crack and somebody's teeth biting into the flesh, the jaws working to tear it into pieces convenient for chewing, and the prominent Adam's apple travelling up and down, up and down the throat.

With everybody else beating him to it, Dibich hurried to the army store that stood in the centre of a throng of bustling grey greatcoats. He tried his best to squeeze through to the tiny window of the booth where the weights were clanging in the brass pan of the scales; he waved his papers, shoving them between the heads of those in front and shouted:

"Let a sick man through, fellows! A sick man, you fellows!"

He was pushed aside.

"We're sick ourselves."

He still pushed towards the window with a stubborn violence forcibly shoving his papers to the man behind the scales.

"No rations for three days! Have some pity, comrades!" he persuaded heatedly.

Several men turned their eyes simultaneously on the papers with suspicion and hostility.

"You're a liar. Didn't you get bread yesterday?"

His papers were thrown back to him but he did not give up, and forced the scalesman to take them again, defending his right to a crust of bread, his eyes almost bulging out of his head from the effort, his hungry face with its dark beard twitching.

"You stop messing the papers about," he cried in a voice of authority and desperation. "Look at them! I'm a prisoner of war, returning from Germany, read them!"

For an instant those around him were silent. Enquiring glances again checked up his papers. Then he heard a venomous voice.

"Lieutenant! You can wait a bit, Your Excellency! We know you officers."

He was again pushed away—his elbows were too weak to defend his rights by force.

At such moments as this Dibich wanted to give up his trip across the country, hire himself out for his keep as a labourer on some farm and here await better times—the main thing was to get his health back. But the oppression of imprisonment had aroused in him such a heat of impatience, such an unquenchable desire to see his home, his mother and sister that it drew him on and on so that if he had had to crawl to his distant and homely Khvalynsk on all fours there is no doubt he would have done it.

In the evenings the passengers closed the doors of the freight car against the cold and began to talk, and Dibich knew who was talking in that impenetrable darkness only by the voices. From these talks Dibich gradually learned the new geography of a country cut into pieces by battle fronts that were born suddenly and moved swiftly.

While he was still in Koenigstein he had heard rumours of two Russias, implacably hostile to each other, and the words "civil war" affected the prisoners more than the word revolution had affected them in 1917. On the way home Dibich learned that all the White forces in the south had acknowledged General Denikin as their commander; that Siberia was under the rule of Admiral Kolchak who called himself the Supreme Ruler of Russia; and that these huge forces in the south and east, comprising all the Cossacks and almost all the officers of the old Russian army, intended to join up in the Volga Basin and close the ring around Moscow, Moscow that was defending the Soviets and still mobilizing men for the Red Army. Dibich had never heard anything about Denikin or Kolchak before. Nor had he, before the Revolution, heard any of those names that the Revolution had emblazoned on its red banners. He was ashamed of his lack of knowledge, explaining it to himself by the fact that he was uninformed, had grown unciviliz-

ed during his imprisonment. It was news to him that in the north and in the west there was civil warfare the same as in the east and the south, that the White armies were operating under generals whose names he had never heard, and that everywhere a Soviet army of workers, sailors and ex-soldiers was fighting against the Whites. He realized why the French prisoners in Koenigstein had attacked the Russians, accusing them of infidelity: Russia's allies had long since ceased to be allies and he learned that the French, British, Japanese and Americans had intervened in Russia's business wherever there was fighting, north, south, east and west. He himself felt somewhat uncomfortable because he did not understand what was going on. All the same he saw that many of the people he heard on the stations and in the train knew no more about events although they had been witnesses of them and had even taken a voluntary or involuntary part in them, while Dibich had been in the fortress. He felt that events demanded of him that he take one side or the other in the struggle but, surprisingly enough, he was not ready to do so. He was conscious of one thing only: if he said that the Whites were right then he would have to admit that the French who were helping them were also right, and that he most certainly could not admit because it would mean that the Frenchmen who had attacked him in Koenigstein were right too and he hated them for having spoken of Russia with such enmity. Everything seemed a hopeless muddle to Dibich. He listened to the talk in the darkness of the tightly closed freight car and thought that circumstances had brought him into a hazy but stormy world from another world quite different, where everything was clearer and simpler. Formerly they had all fought together against one enemy who was apparent to them all. Now they were fighting separately, divided, brother against brother, and one had to see a friend in one brother and an enemy in another. No, there was no way of making sense out of these seething events without parallel! In a state of disquiet, and with tangled thoughts, Dibich dozed off to the cold clatter and rattle of the freight car.

Waking one morning and learning that the train was standing in Rtishchevo junction, a station that he knew well, Dibich experienced the giddiness of hunger that made him feel sick. Before the war, when he had traveled this way, he had always left the train at this station that was so famous for its refreshment room. Whenever a train arrived plates of piping hot borshch were set out on long tables, tongues of fragrant steam curling over them. This place was a school for waiters: little Tatar boys from the surrounding villages learned to serve at table in this refreshment room and everything there was specially appetizing, alluring and of good quality. Dibich had scarcely heard the name of the station when he saw before him, as in a brightly polished mirror, a low row of plates reaching out into the distance filled with orange-coloured borshch with little yellow rings of liquid fat floating on them and wisps of steam curling lazily above them. In front of each plate lay little, freshly-baked patties. Soft white bread cut in hunks, peeped out from behind the flower pots. The Tatar boys, napkin in hand, were pushing the heavy chairs aside with their knees and inviting the guests to be seated. Excited people hurried to the tables.

Gnawing pangs of hunger and a mad desire for food seized the whole of Dibich's body. He glanced out of the truck. Close by a crowd of people hovered around the market women. Overcoming his weakness he jumped out of the truck and ran along the platform to the market place. He had decided to give way to a temptation he had long felt—to barter his German rucksack for food. He tore the rucksack off his shoulders, disposed of its contents —a towel, sweater, bottle of water—into his pockets and inside the breast of his jacket, shook out the rucksack, smoothed it with his hands and made his way to the nearest group. An old Tatar woman with a brown face and tearful, trachoma-ridden eyes, was squatting on her heels in front of a basket half of which was covered with sacking. Roast chickens and a jar of sour milk protruded from the other half.

"I'll swap the bag for a couple of chickens," exclaimed Dibich, imitating the lively style of the shouts he heard around him.

The Tatar woman wiped her eyes on

the corner of her kerchief but continued to sit there in silence.

"What about it, missis? Look, it's a good bag," said Dibich, not very confidently.

The old woman took the bag, turned it over with her wrinkled fingers and handed it back without saying a word.

"Don't you understand Russian?"

"Why me no understand? That's not our bag," said the Tatar woman quite suddenly.

"No, it's not Russian, it's a foreign one, better than ours. Look there's an oilcloth lining to it. It's waterproof. Take it for a couple of chickens."

"The strap's broke."

"It's not broken, just a bit worn. You can mend it."

She again felt the rucksack.

"Hole here," she said shaking her head.

"You can stitch it up," answered Dibich and forced the bag onto her knees.

Slowly she turned the bag inside out, felt the lining, looked into the corners and gave it back to him again.

"Name your price, what's your price, name it!" shouted Dibich turning the rucksack face outwards again.

"Take young chicken," said the Tatar woman picking a fowl up by the leg.

"That's a baby chicken, not a hen! You old skinflint!"

"Me no skinny flint, you skinny flint," she replied undismayed and put the chicken, with its yellow sides glistening from the heat, on top of the others.

"All right," said Dibich impatiently, folding up the rucksack as though he intended going away but at the same time not having sufficient strength to move or to take his eyes off the chickens.

"Give me your chick and add a jar of milk for make weight. I'll take it with me."

"Why a jar? He big jar," answered the Tatar woman. "You drink one mugful."

"Oh, go to your shaitan," [1] said Dibich feeling his strength fail him, "pour it out." And he reached out for the chicken.

"What for shaitan? What for shaitan?" suddenly screamed the old woman.

With an angry gesture she covered the basket with the sack and began wiping her eyes, all the time muttering something in her own incomprehensible language.

"Oh, all right, all right, no shaitan," said Dibich, hurriedly. He concealed his chagrin and impatience and opened the basket. The old woman took the rucksack unwillingly and began to pour the milk out of her jar.

Dibich watched hungrily as the heavy, rose-coloured lumps of sour milk and the dark brown pieces of baked cream from the top slopped into his mug, [1] and he was sorry that there were soldiers watching the proceedings and looking into his mug. He turned away to one side and did not swallow but actually poured the cold, slippery lumps of curd into himself.

He tasted an extraordinarily delicate flavour that reminded him of his childhood and licking his moustache and wiping away the beads of perspiration that had formed on his forehead, he strode across the market place to the station. On his way he broke off a leg from the chicken with exactly the same gesture that he had so often envied in others and was about to lift it to his mouth when he heard a joyful shout raising the alarm.

"Come on, boys, the train for Penza's here!"

He tore himself away from the spot and then ran with the others to a distant line somewhere away at the side.

The passenger coaches were empty and swept clean, the train, apparently, had just been made up. Amidst the noise and triumphant roar the coaches began to fill up rapidly.

Dibich favoured an upper berth, lay down on the long shelf, his greatcoat under his elbow, and set about his meal. So far he could only dream of travelling in a passenger coach, his legs stretched out properly on a bank, and straight to Penza at that, which meant to Kuznetsk and Syzran, a stone's throw from home. He tore the chicken into pieces, dipped them in salt and chewed them together with the soft, crunching bones. He had a vision of a big white steamer, its paddle wheels stirring the mirrored surface of the Volga. The banks stretched along on both sides like green threads or wound in loops on either side of the ship. The contented passengers sat silently

[1] Satan, devil.

[1] The milk has been baked and allowed to turn sour.

enjoying the sunny day. Deep down in the hull of the vessel the engines were breathing regularly. Dibich sucked the bones of the chicken leg and imagined in his dreams how around a far, far bend Khvalynsk would appear, looking as it always did in spring, with flowering hummocks and hills, bright, tranquil and happy.

Suddenly there was a commotion around him. Curses, a woman crying, and a howl arose throughout the whole coach, and through the noise somebody's commanding but hysterical shouts impinged themselves on Dibich's consciousness.

"Get out of the coach, I tell you. Get out of here, all of you!"

The train conductor accompanied by a big lout of a security guard wearing a red armband, his rifle, butt upwards, slung over his shoulder, was forcing his way through the crowd of people in the corridor, angrily answering the cries:

"The devil you were told the train was going to Penza! This train's been specially ordered. Get out without any more talking!"

Swearing, muttering and getting in each other's way, the passengers began dragging their luggage out of the coach.

Dibich carefully wrapped the remains of the chicken in his towel, got down from the shelf, jumped on to the permanent way and, following the crowd, went slowly along a sand path to the humpbacked railway station.

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When Dibich, wedged in an endless line of people, squeezed through the half-open doors into the waiting room he felt slightly giddy. The whole floor was littered with human bodies and the dense smoke from coarse home-grown tobacco gave everything the appearance of being covered with spiders' webs. The giant bar at the far end of the room, grey with dust, was fast asleep, like an old worn-out animal that nobody had any further use for. Children were lying on a bench near the bar or playing around it.

Stepping over the feet in high boots and bast shoes, over baskets and bundles, Dibich reached the bar where he squatted on his heels and leant against the end of the bench.

By the window straight ahead of him he saw a family so unlike all the others around him that he could not tear his eyes off them.

The group consisted of a husband, wife, their boy of about 7, an unusually handsome child who got his looks from his mother, and a grey-headed old lady, with ringlets at her temples, dressed respectably in clothes that were comically old-fashioned; she was not a Russian type, probably a nurse. She was selflessly absorbed in her task of looking after the boy, watching how he drank out of his blue enamel mug and chewed a little piece of black bread spread with something. No sooner had he swallowed one piece than she gave him another, made him take a sip from his mug, straightened the mug in his hand so that he held it level, brushed away a crumb that had fallen on his knee.

The husband and wife were admirably suited, he still had a long way to go to forty and she was very much younger with a face that was just radiant. It was difficult to tell at first glance how much of her elegance was inborn and how much was due to training. The first thing that struck one, however, was this elegance, that is, the pleasant simplicity with which she conducted herself in a situation that was excessively out of keeping with her manners. To tell the truth there was something affected about those manners: she allowed her little finger to stick out when she held the crude tin mug and in general there was a certain amount of play with her soft, cushion-like hands. Perhaps she deliberately exaggerated the daintiness of her gestures as much as to say that under no circumstances would she behave otherwise or perhaps she wanted to amuse herself and her husband by the humour of the fact that such surroundings were absolutely incompatible with anything approaching elegance.

It was obvious that both of them wanted to make a difficult situation easier by treating it good-naturedly—drinking insipid warm water from a mug and sitting on their suitcases in the midst of an enormous and apparently hostile crowd. They occasionally smiled as they handed each other things from a suitcase covered with a napkin that they were using as a table. The glances they cast at the boy, however, betrayed concern and even fear. Yet despite their state of concealed trepidation they managed to convey the impression that they

were people deeply and completely happy and beautiful in their happiness.

Dibich, without being aware of it, began listening to the odds and ends of conversation that the family exchanged with each other and gradually, through the drone of patient human voices, he began to get some idea of what they were talking about. It was a long time since he had seen a family so happy and harmonious; to him it was strange and sad but somehow pleasant that such a family had also been gathered into the common whirlpool that to the soldier was normal but nevertheless difficult enough.

"Asya," said the husband suddenly and in a quite loud voice, "don't you think Olga Adamovna ought to take her brooch off?"

"Brooch?" asked his astonished wife with the burst of curiosity shown by one who expects something particularly amusing to follow.

"Her brooch," he repeated nodding towards the nurse, who immediately put her hand tremulously on the place under her long chin where she wore a cheap little paste brooch in the form of a daisy and a ladybird.

"We may be taken for *bourzhui*, Olga Adamovna, on account of your fondness of luxury."

"Oh, Sasha, how can you! Don't scare poor Olga Adamovna, my dear!" said his wife with charming sympathy for the old lady but her smile expressed the exact opposite of her words—she, too, thought it was permissable to make fun of old Olga Adamovna.

"I am certain we shall get into trouble on account of Olga Adamovna. She has such an aristocratic appearance. See how disdainfully she looks at the soldiers!"

"I do not look at the soldiers at all, Alexander Vladimirovich," objected Olga Adamovna, blushing suddenly. "I am looking at nobody but my Alyosha. Absolutely nobody!"

"Absolutely?" laughed Alexander Vladimirovich. "What does that word mean? Absolutely? I don't know the word. Absolutely? Never heard of it. The absolute has been abolished. The absolute does not exist, madam."

"I ask your protection, Anastasia Germanovna," said the nurse weakly. "When I get excited it affects my Alyosha."

"But you know he's only joking," answered Anastasia Germanovna sympathetically.

"You must spare your nerves, madam," said Alexander Vladimirovich, again in a loud tone and breathing deeply. "We may find ourselves in a much worse position. Don't be angry."

He turned away indifferently and let his bored eyes travel over his surroundings. Dibich got a full view of his face—a big face with the top lip disdainfully upturned and well developed nostrils. He was clean shaven which was the most astounding thing of all: when and where had he managed to take care of his face in the chaos, dirt and inconveniences of the road?

Suddenly he raised his head and turned his slightly squinting glance in the general direction of the bar. Then he stood up and despite his corpulence took a few very light steps, passing by Dibich so easily as though there was no such thing as a crowd.

The stationmaster, with his unkempt beard and rusty, weatherstained cap, was walking along beside the bar pointing out to the station security guard how to place the people and their belongings so that there would be gangways across the room. Behind the stationmaster came a long line of passengers, most of them soldiers. Holding their torn and crumpled papers in their hands they threatened or hopelessly entreated him: "Comrade Stationmaster! Comrade Stationmaster!" He was apparently as much used to these shouts as to engine whistles and paid no attention to them whatsoever.

Alexander Vladimirovich stood in his way so that he could not ignore him and said politely:

"You promised to arrange for us to get to Balashov."

"There will not be any trains to Balashov," answered the stationmaster without the slightest hesitation.

"You remember, I spoke to you before. I'm Pastukhov."

"I remember," muttered the stationmaster, staring indifferently at the leather buttons on the wide, short coat worn by this unusual passenger. "Only army trains are going to Balashov."

"Perhaps we could go on an army train?" said Pastukhov, half asking, half suggesting.

"On an army train? You must see the

train commander about that. That's nothing to do with me. Why don't you go to Saratov?"

"I want to go to Balashov and you suggest Saratov."

"Saratov or Penza," said the stationmaster indifferently raising his hand to indicate that he wished to pass and asked his interlocutor to make way for him.

"But I've just come from Penza," objected Pastukhov, not moving from his place, "why should I go back there? That's a strange and not . . . er . . . a serious answer. I have to get to Balashov. I have a family to look after. I have been sitting at your station for twenty-four hours already and can't even get boiling water."

"There's nothing I can do. D'you want to go to Saratov?" repeated the stationmaster and lifting his dull eyes to Pastukhov tried to get past him.

The crowd of soldiers who had listened jealously to the conversation again began shouting against another.

"Comrade Stationmaster! Comrade Stationmaster! . . ."

Pastukhov still stood in his way and said stubbornly, restraining his anger:

"To get down to business—do you answer for what you say or not? Twice you have promised to put me and my family on a train to Balashov. You said so yourself."

"And what if I did say so? Army trains have taken over the line, understand? Can you understand that?" shouted the stationmaster waking up from his state of tired indifference.

Pastukhov's cheeks twitched.

"Please try not to raise your voice," he said quietly.

"Let me pass," said the stationmaster still more loudly.

"I ask you not to shout at me," said Pastukhov without moving from his position.

"I'm not shouting. Let me pass."

"Please arrange for me to speak with the commander of the army train."

"That's your own business. Let me pass."

"That's enough of it, you," shouted an insolent voice suddenly. "Who d'you think you are, raising such a stink!"

A young soldier, a greatcoat thrown over his shoulders and a well-packed bag in his hand, came towards Pastukhov from out of the crowd. There was merry, sly madness in his slightly slanting, steel-grey eyes. His big blonde head crowned with a flattened soldier's cap he held very high, and his white eyebrows, unusually bushy for so young a man, moved up and down in terrifying solemnity.

Pastukhov tried to push the soldier away but he pressed forward, rapidly shifting his gaze from the stationmaster to the people and then back to Pastukhov.

"The cheek of it! 'I'm Pastukhov!' Think something of yourself, don't you? I'm a somebody myself, too! Ipat Ipatiev, wounded soldier. Yet I'm sticking it. I was told to wait and so I wait. But not you. No. 'I'm Pastukhov! Give me Balashov!'"

"Cut it out," said a somewhat older soldier indistinctly, with seeming laziness but smiling knowingly and taking the younger man by the elbow to pacify him.

"I won't cut it out, just wait a bit. Maybe I've only got one eye but I can see a bit farther than my nose; I know why he wants to go to Balashov. You want to get further south, your lordship? Want to get under the wing of the White generals? I know your kind!"

"I am no lord and you have no right to talk to me in that way. As for my destination, that's a question I think I can settle without your help."

"Pretty smart!" said the soldier, still more excited and irritated. "Today nothing is decided without our help, if you want to know."

Dibich got up from his place on the floor and the crowd pushed him right up close to those engaged in the discussion. He saw the self-control with which Pastukhov tried to maintain his dignity and how, because he tried, his dignity developed into affectation which aroused the curiosity and suspicion of the crowd. All of them had been tortured by their fruitless waiting for trains, they were tired and exhausted from having nothing to do. The quarrel promised a diversion. The security guard languidly waved his rifle to make room for the stationmaster to pass.

"Check up on him, find out what sort of a fellow he is," came a deep bass voice from somewhere behind them.

"We'll check him up all right,"—the

soldier brightened up—"we'll find out what he wants in Balashov!"

"What are you worrying him for?" asked Dibich. "The man is travelling with his family and not interfering with anybody."

"And who are you? One of his sort?"

"Who gave you the right to address me like that?" Dibich added his voice to the discussion.

The soldier's glance sized up Dibich and he spoke less gruffly but still challengingly.

"An officer, aren't you? A touch-me-not, aren't you?!"

"Whether I'm an officer or not, you have no right to speak in such a tone."

"And what right have you to teach me?"

"A year at the front, that's what," shouted Dibich in an unexpectedly shrill voice. "My right comes from two attempted escapes from the prison camp! I earned my right in the German camps! And in a German fortress!"

His inflamed eyelids became still redder, his hands moved rapidly and tensely, he clenched first one fist, then the other, as though he were impatiently awaiting fisticuffs and mustering his last strength in order to control himself. The soldier also began shouting, rolling his bulging and wild-looking eyes.

"Who are you barking at? Who are you to bark at me?"

"Stop it, Ipatka, cut it out!" the elderly soldier again tugged at his elbow.

"Nothing of the sort!" protested Ipat. "Here, hold this!"

He shoved the fat bag into his comrade's hand and grabbed the security guard by the elbow.

"Take us to your commander, comrade, all of us. They'll sort this business out there."

"Check 'em both up," came the bass voice again.

The crowd was roaring by this time, passing on the subject of the quarrel and elaborating on it—everybody adding his little bit to the story. The security guard waved his hands, he wanted them all to go back to their places but the soldier urged him on and the crowd roared.

"Sasha, wait a minute!" a woman's husky voice suddenly made itself heard. "I'll come with you! Don't go by yourself!"

Anastasia Germanovna pushed the people aside and made her way to Pastukhov. He exchanged glances with her over the heads of the crowd. He was pale, his lips were compressed as though from cold, but his voice was tenderly carefree.

"Nothing will happen. It's all nonsense. Go back to Alyosha," and he turned to the security guard.

"Come on," he said and strode off leading the way with such confidence that the crowd fell back to make way for him.

In a small empty room a man in wide breeches was sitting near glass doors through which the railway platform was visible; he had been reading a booklet and, looking up at the newcomers, placed a used matchstick between the leaves to mark his place and stretched his legs.

"Who are they?" he asked the security guard.

"Squabblers."

"This one, comrade, wants to go to Balashov," said Ipat boldly pointing a thumb at Pastukhov; turning the thumb on Dibich, he added, "and this one, he claims he's an ex-prisoner, he's defending them. The people have their doubts."

"And who are you—the people?"

"The people," answered the soldier seriously, "Corporal Ipat Ipatiev, formerly of the Tomsk Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Company No. 2. Volunteered for the Red Army. Been at the front. Discharged because of wounds."

"Where were you wounded?"

Ipat raised his eyes to the ceiling till the bluish whites of his eyes protruded like balls and pointed at his left eye with the same gesture of a crooked thumb that he had used to indicate Pastukhov.

"A splinter went in, right under the pupil, which caused loss of sight to the whole eye. It feels like a bit of dust got in."

"All right, you can go. If I need you, I'll call you."

He walked over to a table covered with a newspaper with torn edges and scored with weird doodling, pulled a tobacco pouch as big as a pillow case out of the roomy pocket of his breeches, shook it out, tore a piece off the newspaper and slowly rolled himself a fat cigarette.

"Got a light?" he asked the security guard.

"Used 'em all up."

Pastukhov lit a match. The frowning

glance of the officer's yellowish eyes stabbed at him in the light of the match and died out together with it.

"Your papers."

Pastukhov took out his pocketbook. Breathing thick smoke on to the important paper that he held open before him, the security officer read it through carefully. The People's Commissar of Education certified that the noted writer and playwright Pastukhov was travelling with his family to his wife's home in Balashov District and requested all institutions and local authorities to cooperate with him in every way on his journey.

"Can you spare me a smoke?" asked the guard.

"What happened out there?" asked the officer without taking his eyes off the paper and handing the pouch over to the guard.

"They demanded that the stationmaster put them on the train. They were told that there's no train."

The officer followed up the paper and turned slowly to Pastukhov.

"The stationmaster isn't a god."

"Then who is a god?" asked Pastukhov with a slight smile.

"God has been abolished," drawled the security guard with satisfaction: he helped himself to a good measure of the tobacco.

"Why do you want to go to Balashov?"

"To get away from the famine. There's hunger in Petersburg."

A minute passed in silence. The security guard spent some time getting a light from a tiny speck of glowing tobacco that had fallen from the officer's cigarette on to the table: the officer sat thinking, stroking his head behind his ear. The guard stood hidden behind a huge cloud of smoke, like an engine shed.

"They all want to get nearer the bread," he said. "They're throttling the village. Gobblers, gobblers. The gent in a hat, the lady with a parasol, but it's the muzhik that follows the plough."

"D'you also want to go to Balashov?" the officer asked Dibich.

"I'm bound for Khvalynsk."

"Why did you stick up for them?"

"Just a fellow feeling. It's nearly a month since I returned from the prison camp and I'm still on my way home. It's not very pleasant sleeping on station floors."

He handed over his papers, all covered in stamps and scrawled signatures. The officer turned the paper about, studied the hieroglyphs, gave it back with a bored gesture and turned again to Pastukhov.

"What can I do for you, then?"

"Get me away from here and to hell with it. Put me on the army train," Pastukhov waved his arms in a gesture of desperation feeling that the moment had come for him to make demands. "Shove me into a brake-van somewhere. We're a family of three. And then there's the old lady, my son's governess. Shove us in somewhere."

"I'll try," smiled the officer.

He carefully hid the tobacco pouch and the booklet in the bottomless pocket of his breeches and nodded his head towards the door.

Pastukhov followed him on to the platform.

There was a strong wind blowing from the steppes and Pastukhov had to hold his hat on. Bent forward, he strode after the officer but could not keep up with his swiftly moving legs: he stared at the officer's strange, wide breeches that blew out like a balloon in the wind. This laconic fellow was obviously a decent sort if his subordinates could get tobacco out of him as easily as that. Pastukhov thought that it would be a good idea to find something jolly to say to the officer as they walked along—there's nothing better than a good laugh to get yourself in right with those in authority—but somehow he had become astonishingly dull during this journey and it gave him an uncomfortable feeling that this man, a reader of booklets, who probably for the first time in his life had met a real writer and a Petersburg writer at that, had not heard a single interesting word from him.

A train standing on a distant siding had been made up of freight cars and open platforms on which stood the transport wagons with machine guns mounted between them. Sentries were dozing on the ammunition boxes and the party on duty was sweeping out the horse trucks; there was an acrid smell of rich, fresh horse dung in the air.

The officer told Pastukhov to wait for him and marched off to a smoke-blackened car at the end of the train.

Pastukhov looked across the fields.

The fields stretched away endlessly, without any visible boundary, here and there patches of black, peaceful ploughland, but the predominating landscape was open steppe, covered in thick, wild undergrowth, a steppe that had not yet awakened from its hibernal sleep. The east wind brought with it the strong smell of wormwood, of last year's dead leaves already warmed by the sun, and the damp cold of the distant gullies. A lark warbled high up in the heavens and then dropped suddenly like a stone towards the earth. The sky became the epitome of immobility—immobile, too, was the earth beneath it. The only visible movement came from a stack of rotting straw from which the wind was trying hard to tear away loose wisps.

From the depths of his memory Pastukhov extracted verses by a poet whom he believed to be the last Russian genius of the 19th century and with a sigh, his eyes fixed on the scarcely visible horizon, he declaimed aloud:

"Our road lies across the steppes,
And into boundless sorrow,
Into the sorrow that is yours,
Oh, Rus! . . ." [1]

The sound of voices drew his attention. Red Army soldiers were singing in the open doors of a freight car. Some of them stood with their arms round each other's shoulders, others sat on the floor swinging their bare feet outside and kicking at the back of a soldier who sat on a sleeper between the rails and was scouring his messtin with sand.

"Comrades, of his labours . . ." a low, deep voice began and the others took up the song which passed from voice to voice until a silver tenor rose above them all, at the very top of the scale, "slept carefree by the oak grove!" Again the low voices began to rumble and again the silver tenor reached heights unattainable to the others—"ca-a-arefree" . . . As they sang the long drawn out "a-a-a" the bare feet swinging in unison gave the man down below such a shove that he tumbled off the ballast of the permanent way and his messtin, rolling past him, went rattling down the side of the embankment. They roared with laughter, stopped their singing and jumped merrily down from the car, joyous, young and happy, their unbelted blouses blowing out freely in the wind.

That "ca-a-arefree" still rang in Pastukhov's ears and he was in perfect agreement with that long drawn out "a-a-a"; that's just it, he thought—carefree, carefree, like the song of the lark, that's probably the crux of the matter. Quite unexpectedly and, he thought, for no reason at all, he recalled Professor Shlyapkin, whose lecture he had once heard in the university. The professor came from a family of serfs and by his own efforts had won for himself a good position and had even put by some money. When his roots were well into the ground he had put up a bust of Alexander II in his cottage in Finland and had added the inscription "To the Tsar-Liberator from the Grateful Shlyapkin." That would be something to amuse the officer with—the idea came to Pastukhov and he began to laugh, the laugh became a chuckle as he watched the happy-go-lucky soldiers and saw a short, stoutly built Tatar, dressed in thick, tightly buttoned clothing who looked strangely like the professor; he immediately corrected himself, remembering that the inscription on the bust had been "To the Tsar-Emancipator from the Emancipated." Nevertheless, he still thought laughingly, his version, "from the Grateful Shlyapkin" was much funnier.

At that moment somebody called him. A bright-faced, ginger-moustached commander, his blouse unbelted, a heavy Mauser pistol hanging from a thin strap across his shoulder, jumped lightly from the wagon.

"Are you the one that's taking a family to Balashov?"

"Yes. Can you please take us on your train. Be so kind. . . ."

"Why should I have anything of the sort on my conscience. There's a war on down there."

"There's war everywhere now," said Pastukhov.

"This isn't war here. There is only discipline here," answered the commander condescendingly. "Excuse me, but you'll have to manage somehow without me."

"So the answer is 'no'?"

"No."

"Good-bye, then," said Pastukhov; he wore a hurt look but at heart he felt strangely relieved.

He was almost happy when he went

[1] Alexander Blok.

back to the station. That foolish phrase stuck in his head—"Grateful Shlyapkin". . . .

With a sly smile he stood before his family. All three of them looked at him in silent alarm.

"Papa," said the boy going shyly to his father, "won't they shoot you?"

Olga Adamovna buried her face in her hands and her curls trembled.

"Why should they?" responded Alexander Vladimirovich seriously and a little disturbed. "They shoot rabbits. Bears. They shoot partridges."

"But when there's war on?"

"War's war. But there's no war here. Here there's just disorder."

He looked at his wife. She was sitting very straight, looking wonderfully pretty in her fear. Her eyes were wet with tears. He sat down on a suitcase beside her, took her smooth fingers in his and said:

"Asya, we must go to Saratov."

He looked up at the window, dismal and dusty.

3

To Pastukhov work was like smoking: his whole environment was repulsive if he could not be alone with his pencil and paper for at least three hours a day.

"It's like taking the sickle away from the reaper at harvest time," he said angrily to Asya when she, feeling her husband's depression, put her arm round his shoulder.

He tried turning a Gladstone bag upside down on his knees and, using it as a table, scratched a few words in pencil. But the noisy passengers beside him, crowded round an up-ended wooden trunk, were shouting over a game of cards. They were chattering nonsensically, and cursed and roared like the monsters in a nightmare.

Olga Adamovna put her fingers in Alyosha's ears, turned red and white alternately and looked imploringly at Alexander Vladimirovich, who merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Get used to it, madam."

"I am already used to it, but my poor Alyosha! . . ."

The railway car was as full of people as a frying pan full of chip potatoes, and they had to sit wherever the crowd pushed them; at every station more and more people crowded into the car. They all came—wounded Red Army soldiers going home to convalesce, peasants from neighbouring villages, refugees from the Ukraine, Moscovites travelling on government business, ordinary people fleeing from the hunger in the towns, and even a party of Austrian prisoners. Bare feet dangled from all three storeys (the two sleeping berths and the luggage rack) and the tousled heads of those who lay snoring on the floor stuck out from under the seats. The whole crowd was busy swatting flies, buzzing and seething like meat baking in an oven; but the people did not feel the torment of such a situation, they were even confident that they were going from the worst to something better, like all those who travel of their own accord, and conversations were animated.

At Atkarsk Pastukhov managed to get out of the car and go for boiling water. He was the focus of all eyes—he carried the copper coffee pot, scoured to a rosy-hued brightness, with such daintiness, afraid of scalding himself or spilling the water on his light-coloured suit. He saw Dibich in the queue waiting for hot water and invited him, if he would care to, to join them in a cup of tea.

They settled down somehow and looked gratefully at Anastasia Germanovna's dainty hands: with a teaspoon she handed out tiny pieces of sugar and with a penknife cut up a piece of bread—her whole manner, her radiant smile seemed to say that it was pleasant travelling in this stinking car with the flies and the card players, travelling towards the unknown, to a place they had not intended going to, it was all very nice, if, of course, one knew how to behave oneself in company and if one, like she, could hold the little finger properly extended.

"So you're from Khvalynsk, are you?" asked Alexander Vladimirovich. "I also came from Khvalynsk. Have you heard of the Pastukhovs? . . Hardly, of course. My late father left there a long time ago and I was quite young when I last went there. We were not very well known in the town. There was a time when we had an estate in the country. One doesn't speak of such things today. . . ."

He squinted slyly at Dibich. As he unscrewed the cap from his flask, he recalled the times in his St. Petersburg study when he had boasted to his guests, pointing to the furniture of Karelian birch: "Those things came from Khva-

lynsk, my grandfather's... Father ruined the estate ... that's all that's left of it...” Now the whole house, including the Karelian birchwood furniture, had been abandoned in St. Petersburg and Pastukhov was angry with himself because his memory kept bringing up this unpleasant thought and he never did like unpleasantness.

“Here in this magic flask we have the blood of a witch,” he said and with a look of mysterious severity poured a few drops into Dibich's tea. “I mixed in this flask the remains of everything there was on the sideboard—brandy, rum, vodka and some homemade wine. You can imagine how it fizzed and frothed when I shook it up. Drink as much as a teaspoonful and you feel the devil coursing through your veins.”

Dibich sipped his tea and waited for the drink to take effect. He raised his eyebrows in surprise: true enough a wonderful, long forgotten, mischievous warmth crept over his whole body. Pastukhov smiled with satisfaction.

“Listen,” he said simply, as though to an old acquaintance. “You must have seen a lot when you were amongst the Germans, didn't you, now? If it is not too disagreable to you try to remember some of your experiences. Just the main points.”

“The main points?” Dibich seemed to be asking the question of himself. “I don't know how I shall answer that question in ten years' time,” he said thoughtfully. “That is if anybody will be interested in such things and I live another ten years. Perhaps by that time the Germans will be regarded as undefiled spirits? Perhaps I myself shall have degenerated? Today I recall only two sensations and my reactions to them: the desire to eat and the desire to escape. That was the chief thing.”

“Homesickness?” asked Pastukhov.

“Of course, it was nostalgia. But it was not only that. Of course, I was longing to get back home again—you only begin to understand your own country properly when you are away from it, that's true. But more than anything else there was a desire to get it all over and done with. To finish it right to the end.”

“To finish what?”

“To end the war. You know there were times I thought that everything was so hopeless!”

“Hopeless?”

“Yes, hopeless, I had gone through the valley of death for nothing. That feeling I took with me from the front. The men had been through so much—I saw everything, with my own eyes ... men blown to pieces! There were times when you could not tell the splinters of wood from the soldiers' bones, which was mud and which was blood—it was all a hopeless mix-up. For a long time I believed that we should win. I was fiercely anxious to finish it off myself, with my own hands.”

Dibich clenched a tiny, bony fist and in a fit of despair struck it on his bony knee. He was sitting low down on a greatcoat rolled up in a ball and his knees were drawn up to the level of his chest. The bristles on his weather-beaten face puffed out when he began to speak hurriedly.

“As soon as I was taken prisoner I vowed I would escape. And I was starving there. It was deliberately done to torture us. If they had paid the prisoners only a tenth of what they earned... Or given them just potatoes, say. We got nothing but beet soup all the time. It was the same there as at the front—annihilation. They gave us a section of the cemetery—I was at Gross-Poritsch, a small camp, no more than three thousand—and every morning we carried out our dead. Some had had stomach trouble, they could not stand the beet diet. The others could not stand the humiliation and died by their own hands. Almost every night—excuse me, (he glanced at Anastasia Germanovna and lowered his voice), we took the suicides down from their nooses in the latrines. At that time I thought we should pay the German devils back for it all. I got away. The first time with a second lieutenant.”

“A little more detail,” insisted Alexander Vladimirovich, settling down more comfortably.

“A simple matter. To a Russian imprisonment is like a noose round the neck. The French are different. In the camp the officers' barracks were half and half, we and the French. When they came the French immediately settled down: they made wooden hooks for their caps, and clothes hangers for their

uniforms—just like a Paris fashion salon. Pictures of girls on the walls, sand underfoot, parcels from the Red Cross and all sort of trading. They laughed and sang, sometimes Catholic hymns in Latin, sometimes French songs, jolly ones like marches. And all the time they were stitching and cleaning, always found something for their hands to do. But the Russians sat for hours on end with their eyes fixed on the sky, at a lonely cloud; and if they sang, the songs made you want to weep. It is true that sometimes they made merry and danced so that sawdust was shaken down from the loft above. Then they would sit down again and stare at a fixed point for a week on end. And so I sat staring and staring at the sky and then—goodbye! The technique is well enough known: you have to wait until the corn in the fields stands high and the ears are formed. I volunteered for work: officers only worked if they wished to. I began working with the soldiers in the field, hoeing up beets. At the end of our field there was a small copse—seemed to be painted, like everything else in Germany—and the trees were pretty sparse. Beyond it there was a narrow-gauge railway and beyond that a field of corn. I began to hang back as though the work was too much for me and I saw that a certain second lieutenant, also from the officers' barracks, was trying to dawdle so as to hang even further back than I did. We soon came to an understanding and in order not to interfere with each other we decided to escape together. At first we were watched very carefully but they soon gave that up. The Landsturm soldier who was our escort used to laugh at us—officers were no good at peasant labour. We agreed with him, our backs were not used to it, we did not know how to bow down. We slipped away half an hour before knocking-off time, just before the evening roll call. We reckoned that it would not take more than a quarter of an hour to slip through the wood, across the railway line and hide deep in the corn. When we were found missing at roll call, the escort would first have to take the prisoners back to camp and by the time the pursuit had been organized it would be dark and we would hide not far away from camp for the night. Usually men who escape try to get as far away as possible immediately, but I convinced my companion that we must lie down somewhere nearby, because the pursuit would go farther and farther away from the camp with every hour and we could outwit them by keeping behind the pursuers instead of in front of them. Everything turned out as I expected. We had hardly hidden ourselves in the grain before the alarm sounded: the escort fired their rifles and sounded rattles like those we use in the gardens to drive the birds away. It was our good fortune that a train came along at that moment clanging loudly—they have bells that work by steam, you can't imagine the noise they make. With that noise going on the alarm wasn't very noticeable and the peasants in the surrounding villages didn't pay any attention to it. But we heard it all right, our ears were well on the alert. The night passed quietly. We lay in a hollow in the middle of the field and at dawn stuffed our pockets full of grain; it was already ripe and it gave us strength. The tracks that we left in the grain might have remained but again we were in luck's way: a wind sprang up at dawn and ruffled the corn back into position and we remained there the whole day well hidden from view. Thirst was the only trouble, we had taken very little water, only an Eau-de-Cologne bottle full of it—the Frenchmen gave us the bottle. We went on at night and our first march took us through the mountains and across the Austrian frontier—a wonderful place, you know. Morning found us in another valley and we lay down to sleep in the corn again. This was Bohemian country and we hoped that amongst the Czechs we should be more at ease, the population would be on our side. But still we were afraid to show ourselves. And so we went on; lying in the fields by day and continuing our march by night. We avoided human habitations, wherever we saw a light we made a detour. By the end of the fifth day we had grown weak: not a crumb of bread had we eaten, nothing but raw grain. I was not too bad, I was still strong in those days, but the second lieutenant began to mumble—wouldn't it be better to give ourselves up, they'd capture us anyway, or we'd die in the

fields. At night he would drop like a stone, would not be able to get up. In the morning we would start off again and then flop down and sleep. One afternoon, a week after we fled from the camp, we were lying in some bushes. There was pasture land nearby and cows grazing. A cow came wandering towards the bushes. She was a big fat beast, red and white patches, an udder as big as a bucket with the milk simply dripping from it. I looked the cow straight in the eyes—you wouldn't let us down, nursie, would you? She looked at me so gently, with tears in her eyes—please, help yourself, I feel sorry for you—and she turned towards the bush and began nibbling. I crawled under her, got my mouth under one of the dugs and began to milk her. I got dizzy from it as though I was drunk. I swallowed the milk and it poured all over me, got under my tunic collar and it was warm. Then my fingers began to ache but still I kept on at the milking. The second lieutenant crawled towards me and whispered to me to let him take my place. I told him to lie down on the other side. He crawled to the other side of the cow but my head got in his way and he couldn't get into the proper position. I turned away, arranged him under the cow and began to squirt the milk into his mouth from two dugs at once, as though it were into a bucket. I heard steps and told him to hurry away! I crawled off into the thicket. He again took hold of the dugs with his clumsy fingers and began to pull at the udder; he did not seem to hear anything—there was a crackling in the bushes quite close by. Suddenly I saw a young lad in his 'teens, obviously the herdsman in a hat with a high crown, he pushed aside the leaves and saw a man lying under the cow. I hadn't even time to wonder what it would be better to do—talk to him or hide and wait—when he leaped backwards and ran away at full tilt. That was the end of our journey. . . We hid deep in the thicket. We heard voices all round us, they were coming from all sides. We were caught, there was nowhere to run. I thought that it was a good thing they were Czech peasants, at least they would not beat us up. I began talking to them in Russian but they only shook their heads: it was all very well, but come on into the lock-up please. I thought they were just holding us for the look of things and later would give us a chance to escape. As soon as we got to the village in the middle of the crowd I saw an Austrian military policeman on a bicycle. That immediately put a different complexion on matters. . . You know, it seemed a pity that we were captured by an Austrian. In 1916, during our offensive, we took those long-legged fellows prisoner by the hundred. My battalion alone sent almost a thousand of them back to Russia. And now . . . what is there to talk about! They marched us back to Gross Poritsch by stages, locked us up in the punishment barracks and deprived me of my arms. . . ."

"How's that, your arms?" Pastukhov put in.

Dibich stopped, thought for a second and then pulled a red ribbon out of his breast pocket. Pastukhov took it, looked at it and handed it to his wife.

"The St. Anna sword-knot, Asya. They used to wear them on their swords, remember?"

Anastasia Germanovna held the sword-knot reverently in her soft fingers and allowed Alyosha to touch the ribbon.

"There are some of them with a white tassel," said Alyosha.

"I tore the tassel off," said Dibich.

"Didn't you like it?" asked Alyosha.

"You were decorated?" asked Pastukhov.

"Yes, I got the huckleberry—officers used to call that red sword-knot the "huckleberry"—just before I was taken prisoner. And that happened during a battle for a height. The Germans had a fierce tussle with us and wiped out my battalion, but I continued fighting with the few men left until I was wounded. The Germans allowed the officers to retain their side arms. In the camp, however, the commandant was a coward and he took away the swords from those officers that still had them, leaving only the sword-knots. They told us the knots were in place of receipts, when the war was over we would get the swords back. Before I escaped I sewed the sword-knot in my sleeve, but I had to tear off the tassel because it was too bulky. I stitched it in here—d'you know what the Germans did to the prisoners?—they cut a piece out of the sleeve and stitched a piece of red cloth

in its place. That's something you can't tear off. I hid the sword-knot under that patch. One of the Frenchmen gave me a needle. The Frenchmen had everything, even knives. In the hands of the Russians, you know, even a toothpick was considered dangerous. When I was recaptured, the commandant told me I was to be deprived of my side arms and ordered me to give up the sword-knot. I told him I had lost it. They kept me without water for three days. They tore open all the seams of my clothing, but there it still is," added Dibich proud as a child.

Pastukhov chuckled in astonishment and admiration.

"The Russians, the Russians," he repeated, "I can well believe that in such hands even a toothpick may be dangerous. Well said. And they have to run. Run! That is a specific quality of ours. Everybody runs: the schismatics, sweethearts, convicts, college boys, Tolstoys. Have you ever thought of that? Running after a decent life. After happiness, freedom, a fantasy, glory. They run from the towns into the forests and from the forests into the towns. Strange people!" he concluded looking curiously over the car packed tight with human bodies.

"We are also running," said Asya shyly.

"But after what?" asked Pastukhov.

"What do you mean 'after what'? After bread, potatoes, beets," said Asya playfully, but at the same time with the touch of the housewife about her, as much as to say that without losing her ethereal smile she could be of the earth, earthy, as well as any village wench.

"And what next? You made two escapes? One failure didn't discourage you?" asked Pastukhov.

Dibich's face turned grey as a door mat, beads of perspiration broke out on his round forehead, he slowly rocked his gaunt body, his eyes fixed on the bread.

"Well," he muttered through clenched teeth, "you can't tell all about everything. The second time I tried my luck alone. I always had the idea that if it had not been for my companion I would have got away the first time. I had no luck the second time, either. I got as far as the Bodensee. It was a long trip but I wanted to reach Switzerland. I was already in a boat when they caught me. They turned the searchlights on me. After that I was sent to the fortress."

Dibich broke off suddenly and wiped his perspiring forehead with a trembling hand.

"Is this going to last long?" He looked round the car with a dull glance.

"I don't know. Doesn't seem as though it will end soon."

"Can you explain all this to me? Can you tell me what's happening? Not just by naming things, there are too many names, but so that I can understand."

Pastukhov frowned at the window. The telegraph posts and bushes did not flash by, they did not even float by, they were just crawling languidly backwards as though they did not know their own minds, whether to remain in the fields or follow the train windows. The engine was making the grade with great difficulty, dragging the clanking train behind it.

"Sometimes I think I understand everything," Pastukhov began slowly. "And sometimes I cannot make head or tail of even the most obvious things. Perhaps there is only one thing that is indisputable: today the whole people has risen and set off on the run—and not only the schismatics and the Tolstoys. They're running after a decent life, after a fairyland."

"After bread," Asya seemed to be correcting him and she smiled, but sadly this time.

"The history of Russia is in the making and it is quite possible . . ." Pastukhov began again, checked himself and then finished significantly: "that not only Russian history but the history of all mankind."

"A sad history," put in Asya again, sorrowfully.

"I am prevented from understanding what is happening," Pastukhov considered, "by the peculiarities of my make-up. It's not because I'm lacking in intelligence but because I am far too impressionable. That's the tragedy. The tragedy of an artist. And I, I must tell you, am an artist. In order to be an artist one must be impressionable to a high degree, otherwise you do not really see the world. The more

impressionable an artist is, the more he suffers because the artist always visualizes the sorrow of the world in some single event and is unable to tear his eyes off that phenomenon. Not the sorrows of the world as a concept—you understand me?—but in the living man who suffers. I see, for example, you—understand? Not man in general, but you, during that escape that you told us about, you in your army blouse with that prisoner's band on your arm, the place where you stitched up your sword-knot. And for me you have got in the way of everything else, of the whole world, that is for the moment—you understand?—at the present moment I see nothing but you. To me you are the world. I can no longer think in concepts, I cannot talk in general, I cannot tell you what is going to happen. Perhaps the only thing I can tell you is what is going to happen to you. You are going to have a bad time. I think you will have a very bad time."

Dibich leant back a little, covered his face with his hands and the others could see that his hands trembled and his elbows banged against his knees.

"Oh, Sasha! What a gloomy Pythian you are!" exclaimed Asya. "Don't believe him, please, I beg you. He never could prophesy. . . ."

Dibich seemed about to weep: he trembled, almost shuddered, he wanted to take his hand from his face but he could not. At last the hand seemed to fall away of its own accord and hung down beside the other between his knees. Again he turned ashen, the perspiration broke out and he spoke quickly in apologetic tones.

"Can you spare another piece of bread? . . I feel bad after the tea. . . ."

There was a moment of deadly silence. Then Pastukhov took hold of the bread, broke off a hunk, squeezing it as he did so, and held it out, almost thrusting it into Dibich's hand.

"And drink up that witch's blood, whatever else you do, here, drink up," he was distraught as he hurriedly took up the flask and poured more liquor into the tea.

Asya looked down at the ground, the blood rushed to her cheeks, to her fine temples and her forehead and she seemed to blossom out looking prettier than ever.

Dibich began munching the bread, his jaws working at a peculiarly rapid rate, and in his greed there was something animal-like, something of an exposure, as though he stood before them naked and hairy.

Olga Adamovna was scared and thrust Alyosha behind her for protection.

4

The Pastukhovs waited until the crowd had thinned out a little and then carried their things out onto the station square. Alexander Vladimirovich threw off his overcoat, wiped his perspiring face, glanced fastidiously at his dirty hands, chuckled at his own thoughts and turned to congratulate his wife.

"Welcome home, the devil take it! Here I am at last."

On the long straight street they could see the barrack-like brick houses with the plaster all cracked and broken. In the middle of the road men walking in single file were carrying sacks, the immortal sparrows darted up from the roadway like bullets fired from a gun, the signs hanging outside the closed and boarded shops still shone with tarnished gilt—"Tea, Sugar, Coffee." On top of the heap of suitcases and bundles standing on the cobbles lay Olga Adamovna's brightly-coloured workbasket, a string bag containing Alyosha's toys, a clockwork motorcycle, a ball quartered in four colours, a Farman aeroplane and a picture book.

"It was foolish to lose track of all my acquaintances," said Pastukhov. "I don't suppose there's a single one left after these nine years."

"Sasha, again I tell you: go at once to the highest authorities, that's always the best thing to do," advised Asya with profound conviction in an exceedingly quiet yet persuasive tone.

"Please don't bother me. As though the authorities need my suitcases!"

"It's not the suitcases they want, but you, understand? Tell them who you are, show them your credentials and. . . ."

"Credentials? Who do you think I am, a member of the Revolutionary Military Council? A representative of the Economic Council? Food Commissar?"

He snorted and turned towards the station entrance. Not very far away he saw an old man with a dove-grey beard; he was dressed in a frock coat

with shiny elbows and a weather-beaten hat from under which protruded wisps of hair of the same colour as his beard. Despite his old-fashioned look there was something about him that breathed a strange vitality. He looked like a scientist or perhaps the keeper of the provincial records—the old man's bright eyes expressed both timidity and boldness. He looked at Alyosha like a little boy trying to make up his mind to speak and not sure of how it would turn out. Suddenly he walked towards Alyosha with a mincing gait, raised his eyebrows and asked:

"Where are we going, eh?"

Olga Adamovna immediately took Alyosha by the hand, pulling him towards her, but he was by no means dismayed and answered quite simply.

"We're there already. Only father hasn't yet decided where we're going to live."

"That's just it," muttered Pastukhov.

"Please forgive me for speaking to the boy," said the old man blushing; he boldly raised his hat to Anastasia Germanovna and lowered his voice as becomes one who has been well brought up. "What an extraordinary handsome boy!"

"Don't say such things!" objected his mother, also blushing; she looked quickly at Alyosha and covered her face with her hand so that he should not see her pleasure.

"So you want to live in Saratov?" the old man again turned to the boy.

"We are from St. Petersburg," said the boy sternly.

Alexander Vladimirovich laughed.

"In a way we're refugees from the capital. We are running away from ourselves. Everything here is strange to me although I come from these parts myself. Pastukhov. Ever heard the name?"

"What? You? Are you really? Ah-ha. I understand. Is it possible?" the old man asked and answered his own questions. "Now I know you. What an extraordinary coincidence! I'm very pleased. Allow me to introduce myself: Dorogomilov, Arseni Romanych, and in the present case your fellow townsman."

He quickly offered his hand to everybody. His manner took on an astounding, dual character, the more fussily he talked, the more confused he became; he stuttered and stammered, seemingly unable to express himself, and at the same time he became simpler and more engaging.

"I was right, fame is bound to come in useful some time," said Asya and smiled wryly at her own platitude.

"Could you advise me where to settle down for a start?" asked Pastukhov.

"I could very easily. For the immediate future you could come to my place!" exclaimed Dorogomilov. "You could live in my flat. That is, of course, if you would find it convenient. D'you know, I've been coming to the station every day for a week to meet some good old friends, but they never come! A fortnight ago I got a telegram from them saying that they had left. They were coming from Moscow. Just think of it! And I have so much spare room. I live in a government house and am quite alone."

"What sort of a government house?" was the question that interested Alexander Vladimirovich.

"You see . . ." chuckled the old man sucking in air with a loud noise, "it's not a government flat, really. I have a flat in a house and it belongs to the municipality. The house belongs to the town. I used to be the head bookkeeper of the town council, thirty years I had the job, yes, thirty; well, you see I just stayed on the job. Only now it's not the town council, it's the Department of Municipal Economy. So that's that!"

"And will I have a room for myself?" asked Alyosha.

"You'll have a villa with a fountain and a private carriage," said his father looking at him with disapproval.

"No, not that, but your own room!" said the old man with sympathy and nodding to Alyosha. "Dad and Mum can fix themselves up in the big room, and there's a small one leading out of it. That's where you'll live and . . ." he made a rather hesitant bow to Olga Adamovna, "you, if you will accept."

"And that's a communal apartment?" asked Asya not without a shade of fear.

"By no means! The house belongs to the municipality, to the town, but I always lived alone in the apartment and I still live . . . so far, you know, so far. . . ."

"But we shall crowd you out!" mut-

tered Asya; she was touched by now and grateful, there were bright crystal tears in her eyes and her lips pouting slightly.

"Of course not! Why, I have... Believe me, I shall be only too glad! I shall still have another two rooms! I have the whole floor, the entire storey! The town gave it to me, the apartment... I no longer remember how long I've been living there!"

"Fantastic!" said Pastukhov.

"Fate, perhaps?" Asya smiled half questioningly.

He nodded to her in agreement.

"Will you come?" Dorogomilov addressed himself to them all in tones of exultation and suddenly tore his hat from his head with the joyful gesture of a mariner who has just caught a first glimpse of long-awaited land in his telescope.

Alyosha immediately copied the gesture, waving his white summer cap.

"Mummie agrees, mummie agrees!" he cried.

"Why are you shouting like that?" said his father but not at all angrily.

"Now about the baggage. Let's go for a barrow," said Dorogomilov and held his hand out to Alyosha.

Olga Adamovna immediately began to bristle—she pulled on an old and very dusty travelling coat of some sort of imitation sealskin and pushed herself into the foreground.

"How can you?! Alyosha scarcely knows you!"

"Oh, we'll get acquainted, we'll get acquainted! All right, I'll go without him."

Dorogomilov trotted towards the distant wing of the station where the crowd of passengers were still sorting out their belongings. His legs, encased in cylindrical trousers that made them look like sausages, took little mincing jumps under the wind-blown skirts of his frockcoat. His hair streamed out from under his hat and he ran with one shoulder pushed forward as though he were cutting his way through the air.

Alyosha laughed out loud and began hopping from one foot to the other.

"Mummie, does he do it on purpose? He's like a Christmas tree toy."

"He's a museum exhibit," said Pastukhov, splitting the words into syllables and winking a little slyly at Asya. Suddenly he too burst into loud laughter. "The devil alone knows what he is! He's not like anything else at all!"

"Believe me, Sasha, believe me I am not mistaken," said Asya with a radiant, inspired expression on her face. "He is the righteous man that has crossed our path. Believe me."

She layed a special emphasis on the word "righteous."

"Or a lunatic," snapped Pastukhov....

An hour and a half later the procession approached the house inhabited by Arseni Romanych. He led Alyosha by the hand, with Olga Adamovna, more excited than anybody else, following fast on his heels.

A couple of lads whom they had hired pushed their luggage along the road on two hand-barrows. The Pastukhovs brought up the rear of the procession.

Dorogomilov's house stood in one of the quiet streets that run from the town boulevard—The Limes—down to the Volga. It was a two-storey detached house covered with a stucco that had once been rose-coloured but had become a dull brown, all chipped and picturesquely cracked over a crumbling plinth. The house was easily remembered by the covered porch that jutted out into the pavement. In the fancy frames of the windows and porch door there were still some panes of coloured glass that the boys had not broken. Other prominent architectural features of the house were those common to the particular taste of those who built their houses in provincial towns about a hundred years ago: Venetian windows on the upper floor with oval panes in the casements: very flat columns decorating the walls from plinth to cornice, so flat and squat that one might have thought they were painted on the stucco. To the right of the house—a wooden fence with big gates, and to the left—a low single-storey wing—nothing different from any of the other houses except the old yellow acacias, the buds already bursting, that hung down in long clusters over the fence.

Arseni Romanych disappeared through a wicket gate into the yard and a minute later appeared, panting, to open the porch door. They began carting the luggage upstairs. Alyosha was the first

to run up the creaking staircase, he found himself in a passage in front of a window. What he saw through the window surpassed all his expectations. Arseni Romanych had not lied when he told Alyosha, as they walked from the station, of all the marvels he would find in his new apartment; but he could not give the boy even a faint idea of the extraordinary world that was now spread out before him.

A big garden sloped down away from the house. Some of the trees were already burgeoning, others had opened fat buds to allow long, velvety, beet-coloured catkins to hang down. There were spots of light that seemed like little yellow chicks feeding on the footpaths. There were different kinds of grass—very short grass that looked as if it had been clipped with shears and tall tangled grass. An old wheelbarrow with the wheel missing was lying on its side. "We'll fix that wheel," thought Alyosha and looked up beyond the garden.

The first things he distinguished clearly were a white church and a tall, slender steeple behind it. There, just beyond the church and the steeple he saw something that he did not recognize—flashing vividly, tremendous in size, like many, many fields on end, it stretched in all directions and met the sky. Then he realized that there were no fields there but water, and then with still greater suddenness it dawned on him that the water must be the Volga.

"The Volga! Mummie! The Volga!"

Nobody answered him, they were all too busy carrying the luggage in, and for a moment he was swept with doubt—perhaps he had been mistaken? The Volga should have been something like the Neva, but much bigger of course. Alyosha, however, was looking at something that did not remind him of the Neva at all. There was no real end to it, and the place where the land most likely began was just as flat and endless as the water. The colour was different there, a sort of lilac-grey, but the colour was alive and mobile, like the water. Over there he could also see separate trees and perhaps little houses, but even they seemed to be growing out of the water. Alyosha had so often heard that there are big steamers on the Volga. But no matter how much he searched with his eyes he could see nothing but water and more water and not a single steamer. Quite nearby, over the roofs of the houses, Alyosha certainly did see two little dark boats moving towards each other. Boats, however, could be anywhere, not necessarily on the Volga.

Alyosha decided to find out for certain whether it was the Volga or not, and he was even glad that nobody had heard him shout "Volga!" And then there, from behind the church, there appeared on the water a little triangle which began to grow in size as though it were coming out of the church like the lid slides out of a pencil box. The triangle grew into a square, a second square appeared on top of the first, and they both continued emerging from the church; the bottom square carrying the top one along with it; suddenly a third appeared just like the second and the first and they all began to stretch out into long strips: then the sunlight caught them and Alyosha could see the little windows on each of the strips and when more and more of the windows came out of the church Alyosha realized that it was a steamer. Yes, it was a steamer moving along not far from the bank. More and more visible signs of the fact that it was a ship came into view—a boat on the upper deck, the pilot house, a black funnel, another boat, and down below, under the paddlewheel, froth like the beaten white of an egg and a wave that spread out fanwise from the vessel; on the deck there was another boat after which the upper strip with the windows broke off suddenly, a little further and the middle strip broke off and at last came the stern of the steamer and a sloping flagstaff with an up-ended boat hanging from it above which a pennant was flying; and the whole of this huge three-decker, from stem to stern, was as clear to him as if it lay on his hand, and there it was floating along in front of Alyosha, who stood on tiptoe holding tight to the window frame; and as though it wished to leave no doubt in the boy's mind, the steamer angrily belched forth a cloudy puff of milk-white steam and a second later the screech of a siren that sounded like an irritated, elderly person came dully in at the window.

"A steamer on the Volga!" shouted Alyosha beside himself with excitement.

"Hurrah!" shouted Arseni Romanych in response, dropping a suitcase on the

top stair and all of them, as though by agreement, crowded to the window and stood shoulder to shoulder looking at the river.

"Oh, my good God, a steamer!" sighed the father after a moment's silence. "Asya, perhaps it's a good thing we came to Saratov."

"Of course it is, Sasha!" answered the mother with a happy but soundless laugh.

"It's a very, very good thing!" Arseni Romanych confirmed digging Alyosha in the ribs. "Isn't it, Alyosha?"

"Are there bigger steamers than that one?"

"No, that's the biggest kind there is," said Arseni Romanovich, decisively.

"Shall we go on a steamer, Dad?"

"Hmm . . . perhaps we'll even go on a hydroplane," muttered his father gloomily and walked away from the window.

They had to settle down and everybody got busy again. Dorogomilov announced that he had to go to the office and asked Pastukhov to make himself at home. He told Alyosha that he could play on the lawn in the garden, that there was a carpenter's bench in the shed and that he could go into all the rooms.

The apartment was a strange one—one of those that were not built to the design of the tenant but by the authorities for an unknown occupant—an official apartment, in other words—but an old-fashioned one, with thick walls, heavy floorboards that would not give under the weight of a well-fed horse, thresholds that three generations could not wear down. In the centre of the front room that had been given to the unexpected guests there was a huge Russian stove, apparently the room was intended as a combined kitchen and dining room as was of en the case in old families. From either side of the stove stretched a partition forming a small room into which protruded the sleeping shelf of the stove.

Alyosha immediately tried out the shelf, sat on it, lay on it and stood on it, stretching up his arms to see how far it was to the ceiling; he rapidly laid out on the shelf the toys he had grown tired of and ran out into the corridor, to the window. He had been forbidden to go into the garden without Olga Adamovna and after having looked at the Volga for a little while he began to explore the apartment.

There was only that one window in the corridor, the one that looked out on the Volga and farther down, towards the end it was dark and in the darkness along the walls he could feel that there was all sorts of old rubbish there. He became accustomed to the half light and feeling his way forward by tiny steps, Alyosha found baskets piled one on top of the other, a log of firewood, a cupboard with a piece of cardboard in place of a missing door, an iron water container, a washstand, a big cage (evidently for a parrot), armchairs and a folded bed lying on them, a pile of books covered with a mat and over them a lamp hanging from God alone knew what. Alyosha touched the things carefully, especially the cage and the water container which had a sort of spout that twisted. His fingers felt smooth and silky and bore the odour of the pavements in summer.

He had nearly reached the end of the corridor when he saw two doors opposite each other. The left-hand door stood slightly ajar and the sun shone through the tiny crack. He peeped inside. It was a room with a kitchen stove. The window looked out into the same garden but from the opposite side; from here he could see the scraggy neighbouring garden and the church gave him a side view quite different from the way it looked through the corridor window.

On the stove lay a lifebuoy painted red and white with torn loops of rope around the outside. Alyosha lifted the lifebuoy and found it heavy; it was surprising that such a heavy object not only did not sink in the water but could even support a drowning man. Alyosha remembered the inscription over the lifebuoys in St. Petersburg, on the bridge near the Summer Gardens, where there were cork balls as well—"Throw to the Drowning." He pulled the lifebuoy down onto the floor, stood it on edge and rolled it a little way like a hoop. "Throw to the Drowning," he said to himself and looked round to see where the lifebuoy could be thrown.

Beyond some banisters he saw a staircase. It led to the yard—the wooden walls of the porch had cracks where the

light shone through and the door was not quite closed. If the drowning man were down there he would have to throw the lifebuoy down the stairs and to follow it there. Then perhaps he would be able to get a glimpse of the garden. Alyosha rolled the lifebuoy to the staircase and was about to take a deep breath in order to shout the order "Let go," when Olga Adamovna flew out of the corridor and, shaking her curls, screwed her eyes up tightly: she could not stand the horror of the situation. She ran to Alyosha with a pained expression, took the lifebuoy away, brushed the dust off Alyosha's jacket, brushed it off his knees, off the palms of his hands—by these selfless actions overcoming her loss of speech—and demanded an answer from him:

"Where was that useless thing?"

"That useless thing was on the stove," said Alyosha.

Groaning she dragged the lifebuoy to the stove.

"Alyosha, Oh, Lord! I can't go out with you now. Mummie and I have to sort out the luggage. Promise me that you won't go one step down that dreadful staircase!" pronounced Olga Adamovna and looked up as though she were calling for help from heaven.

"I won't go a single step down that dreadful staircase," answered Alyosha in the same tone as he repeated phrases at his French lessons and also raised his wily eyes to the ceiling.

When Olga Adamovna had gone away he stood for a minute looking round him in disappointment: he could not find anything else in the room except the lifebuoy. He could not imagine why there was a stove there. Perhaps it was something in the nature of a summer kitchen.

He remembered the opposite door in the corridor and went there. It was closed but opened easily when he just touched it. As in the corridor there were a lot of things piled up, but two large windows that looked out onto the street showed what they were. This was obviously where Arseni Romanych lived: a bed covered with a torn blanket, a writing desk that looked like a bench at which a mechanic or tinker worked, batches, bundles, heaps and mountains of yellowed books, a worn dilapidated plush chair with one arm, a china closet containing brightly coloured crockery and glazed with different kinds of glass—all this spoke of the life of a man with active and even stormy interests.

Alyosha opened the door slightly, pushed in first his nose, then his head, then one shoulder and a foot and then he did not so much go into the room as slip in. But inside he took only one step.

The walls suddenly rang to the screams of two enraged voices. Something fell, rolled and clattered, the screams developed into grunts and groans, blows fell thick and fast and suddenly through the open door on the left (that Alyosha had not noticed before) two boys tightly clutching each other came rolling into the room. Alyosha stepped back and with that scared movement closed the door tightly behind him. He was alone with the savage fighters. They battered at each other in a fury, clutching at a torn book and trying each to push it in the other's face while their free hands struck at sides, backs, heads and shoulders, everything that came within reach of their swift-moving fists. More and more torn leaves flew out of the book, fluttered about and settled around them like pigeons, their fists, working like sewing machines battered more and more furiously and Alyosha could not tell which of the boys was getting the worst of it, who was winning and who was losing. He thought that the doughty warriors would kill one another. They changed places, twisted round, bent down to the floor, jumped up, and in the whirl and flutter of the torn paper he could only make out that one of the boys was red-headed and the other fair like himself—and both of them were bigger than he. The palms of Alyosha's hands grew cold and clammy; he thought that he ought to run away but he could not move and could not take his eyes off the horrible and magnificent spectacle that made his heart tremble. From the fierce words that came to him in snatches, like leaves torn from a book, he could not understand what was going on; the boys groaning and panting spat out single words and Alyosha, holding his breath from sheer fright, groaned in unison with them and without realizing it muttered something to himself.

"Eaten it?" Alyosha caught the words

through the whistlings, cracking, hitting, through the noise of blows and the trampling of feet. "Take that! Take another! Scoffed it, eh? Take that! Take it yourself! And that! There, there! One, two! One, two! . . Ah, Ah! . . ."

At last there was nothing but the cover left in the boys' hands. The red-head grabbed it, threw it in the other boy's face and shouted.

"There's your Conan Doyle! Stuff it down your throat!"

The blonde swung round and again attacked the red-head, raining blow after blow on him.

"I'll Conan Doyle you!"

Their four arms milled around over heads held low like calves in battle, but this time it did not last long. They swung their arms a few times and then separated and stepped back from each other, wiped their faces on their sleeves, panting and breathing with a hiss; they undid their belts, adjusted their shirts and trousers, rebuckled their belts, again wiped their scratched faces with their hands this time instead of their sleeves and looked at their palms to see whether there was any blood. Their faces, however, had not suffered as much as the book.

"D'ja get enough?" asked the red-head.

"You'll get more than that, just wait and see!" answered the blonde.

They stood silent, continued to put their clothes in order and studied the battlefield. The blonde was the first to pick up a few pages of the book and look carefully at them.

"You'll get it from Arseni Romanych for this!"

"You'll get it, not me. Why did you grab the book?"

"And why did you hide it? You're a liar; said you didn't know where it was when you hid it yourself!"

"I found it so I had to read it first. I'd have given it to you afterwards, anyway."

"What did you tell me lies for? I could tell by your nose that you were lying when you were making up to Arseni Romanych."

"I don't make up to him, it's you."

"Oh, no, you don't! Who was dancing round him, 'If we find Conan Doyle, can we take it?' And you'd found it already and hidden it, stuffed it away under the geography!"

"What d'you want the geography for? Poking your nose into it!"

"What d'you think I wanted? I guessed where you'd hidden it. I've got a good nose!"

"A wonderful nose. I'll squash it flat for you."

"Come on an' squash it then," said the red-head, rolling up his sleeves.

The anger passed, however. He also stooped down and picked up some of the leaves from the floor.

"What page you got, Pashka?" asked the blonde after a pause."

"Seventy-five. What's yours?"

"Eleven to sixteen."

"Let's spread 'em out on the bed, then we'll put 'em in order."

"We'll have to paste 'em together. I'll get some gummed paper from granddad, he's got some."

They squatted on their heels and began to crawl about the room picking up the pages, pulling them out from under the bed, the table and the chairs and handing them to each other. After the battle they stood with their faces towards the window and in any case were so engrossed in their quarrel that they did not see anything except each other. As they collected the pages of the book they inevitably had to crawl towards Alyosha: some of the pages had fluttered right to his feet. He wanted to help the boys and was very glad that after such a fierce tussle nobody was seriously hurt. He had to begin by announcing his presence, however. He decided to cough. At that very moment the red-head stood up, looked round the room and turned his fearless yellow eyes directly on Alyosha.

"What's this?" he asked. "Who d'you belong to? Vitya, look here!"

But the blonde had already walked straight up to Alyosha and stared at him with eyes that were unusually fearless and therefore frightening.

"I suppose he belongs to those people that have come to visit Arseni Romanych — from Petrograd," he said.

"Are you from Petrograd?" asked Pashka.

"Yes," answered Alyosha almost choking.

"What can Arseni Romanych see in you?" wondered Pashka.

"Did you watch the fight?" asked Vitya.

"Yes . . . I'm sorry," said Alyosha, making a bow.

"It doesn't matter. We aren't afraid," said Pashka. "What's your name?"

"Alyosha."

"How old are you?"

"Seven—goin' on for eight," said Alyosha running the words together.

"We're from Saratov, me and Vitya, and we're eighteen. And you're from Petrograd and only seven."

"Smart, aren't you! Counting like that—both together!" laughed Alyosha.

"Because you come off worst. You're afraid because we're older. I can beat you with one hand behind my back. Want to try it?"

"No, I don't. Olga Adamovna won't let me fight," admitted Alyosha in a despondent voice.

"Who's she?"

"La bonne."

"And what's that?"

"Governess," explained Vitya.

"Fancy listening to a governess," said Pashka. "She won't let you do anything if you take any notice of her."

"Help us pick up the pages, Alyosha," ordered Vitya.

Alyosha knelt down and, exultant because all fear was gone, began to crawl around the room. He jumped up with every two or three pages and gave them to the boys, knelt down, jumped up again and in this way crawled towards the room from which the boys had come. There he saw high shelves with long rows of books; the books were not in any particular order but they were all standing on the shelves and were not very dusty.

"A library!" he said, sitting back on his heels.

"How d'you know?" asked Pashka jealously.

"My father has a library of his own."

"Nobody has a library like Arseni Romanych," said Vitya.

"We'll soon be making it the town library for all the boys and girls to use," said Pashka.

"I can see Arseni Romanych letting you!" objected Vitya.

"We shan't ask him, if we want it we'll take it," announced Pashka proudly. "That's the new law—take what you want."

"You're a fool," said Vitya.

"It's you that's a fool, want everything for yourself. Greedy guts!"

They both frowned as they packed the pages into the cover. In a minute they were all in place.

"Your granddad told you to go home."

"Nothing of the sort! He told me to sell paint on the market."

"What sort?"

"For Easter eggs. Told me to sell it or swop it for eggs."

Vitya pulled the little packets out of his pocket and the three boys stood and gazed at the pictures on them—brightly coloured rabbits and cocks and big red, blue and violet eggs, bigger than the cocks and rabbits.

"And who needs your Easter egg paint?" said Pashka disdainfully. "Especially now Easter's over."

"The villagers want everything they see," answered Vitya. "They want everything. I took some rubber bands for pocketbooks to the market—you know, little round ones. The villagers took every one of them."

"Did you celebrate Easter at home?"

"And you?"

"You know my mother's dying. And you ask!" Pashka turned away.

Vitya pushed the book under Alyosha's nose, shook it impressively and muttered threateningly.

"Don't you dare let out a single word about this to Arseni Romanych! Watch out!"

Alyosha shook his head and held his hands behind him to look more important.

As the friends walked towards the door, it opened before them. Olga Adamovna, in her quaint travelling coat and her pinned-on toque, stopped short, her hand to her heart. Her long chin trembled strangely.

"Alyosha, how did you get in here . . . with these boys? Who are you boys? Do you live here?"

"We come to visit Arseni Romanych," said Vitya, looking at Olga Adamovna as though he were the master of the house.

"Does she belong to you?" Pashka asked Alyosha unsociably.

"We got acquainted," said Alyosha to Olga Adamovna by way of conciliation.

"You should wait until you are introduced by your elders," announced Olga Adamovna. "What's the matter with

your knees, Alyosha? Come along, I'll clean and wash you, it's time for us to take a walk. Good-bye, boys."

She took Alyosha by the hand.

Pashka turned his head to follow them as they left and then winked at Vitya.

"Let's go to the market!"

In the corridor Olga Adamovna met Anastasia Germanovna and mysteriously nudged her with her elbow.

"There are such horrid boys coming in here!" she whispered. "My God! We've got into an awful house!"

"Don't be afraid, my dear Olga Adamovna," said Anastasia Germanovna lightly. "It's not a bad but a very funny house! Nothing here seems to be whole. All the things are cripples. A house full of the funniest invalids!"

She laughed pleasantly in her silent way and with a sudden burst of fervour pressed Alyosha's head to her heart.

5

Mercuri Avdeyevich Meshkov got up early in the morning. He had never been a lie-abed but during the past year he had suffered from insomnia and his morning began with the dawn. It was a solitary hour, almost monasterial. From the adjoining room came the quiet breathing of his daughter. In his sleep his grandson Victor occasionally banged the wall with elbow or knee—a squabbler with the dreams of a fighting cock! Took after his father, Victor Semyonych, perhaps? The father was still riding the high horse to that very day. His wings had been clipped and his tail feathers pulled, not a speck of down or twig was left of his nest, and one would have thought it time for him to climb down—but no! He still threw his weight about and made promises: "Just wait, papa, just wait!" What was the shiftless fellow waiting for? asked Mercuri Avdeyevich, we've waited eighteen hellish months and the only result is that we're nearer to death. There's my Valeria Ivanovna, she didn't wait but went to her rest. "It's all the same," objected Victor Semyonych, "whether you rise or fall, it's all the same, every day brings you nearer to death, of course. But that all depends on the sternness of Dame Nature. There are other things that depend on man. A real man is gifted with a brain. It is the business of the brain to arrange a man's life." And look how well that brain of yours has arranged everything! exulted Mercuri Avdeyevich. "That's not my brain," again objected Victor Semyonych, "but *their* brain. They have the primitive brain. They think they can do everything by force. This is the twentieth century, a time when strength without education is useless, even harmful. Take me, for example, papa. What sort of a co-worker am I for them? It's just a joke! And they made me come to the Executive Committee! What for? Because there is not a better educated motor mechanic in the whole town than me! They can smash things without us! When they want mending they come to us! It's the education that will foil them, papa, you wait!" I have decided everything for myself, answered Mercuri Avdeyevich, there's nothing to wait for. And what sort of papa am I to you? For three years now I've been bringing up your son and Liza has already forbidden me to mention your name. So that's how we stand! And you call me papa! "You are the grandfather of my son, the father of my wife. Why do you scorn me?" Victor Semyonych is stubborn. "Everything will be restored and Liza and her son will come back to me according to law. So that you are my former papa and my future papa. To the grave." No—Mercuri Avdeyevich could not agree —Liza will not return to you, it's no use getting fancy ideas into your head, young man. Liza has had a taste of freedom and likes it. "What is freedom?"—Victor Semyonych is not to be put off—"Let there be no freedom but enough bread. And the bread will come to me before it does to Liza. Freedom! I would also go running after freedom, but my stomach won't let me. And so I ride around in the Benz provided by the God-given authorities." God-given! says Mercuri Avdeyevich reproachfully. Shame on you! "And why not, papa?" answers Victor Semyonych in astonishment. "They have no shame so why should I have any? Otherwise I should never find a common language with them!" Why do you help them in their evil? Mercuri Avdeyevich is now really aroused and in a ponderous voice, as though he were trying to bring understanding to the prodigal, he repeated from memory the prophecy of Dan-

iel: But the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand....

Grandson Victor banged the wall again and Meshkov thought: no, he's not like his mother, not a bit like his mother! Liza has a soul like Valeria Ivanovna of sacred memory: a humble spirit. Though she's getting stubborn. Whom does she get it from? Not from me, surely?

He believed that he had long since got rid of the sin of stubbornness, especially since that moment when he had decided to leave the world, he had come to regard everything in the world as a testament, as the wisdom of God's punishment and the fulfillment of the prophecies. He decided that in submitting to happenings he was following the dictates of his own heart. He fully realized, however, that he could not help but submit: what you do not give will be taken, what you hide will be found, if you do not show respect your cap will come off and perhaps your head with it. And when you convince yourself that you are submitting of your own free will and for the sake of spiritual salvation, it is then that you really find peace and even if only for a short hour—an hour such as that following the dawn—you will be in mysterious communion with the Almighty. Evil men do not come at this hour—it is light, and for the righteous it is too early.

In the little garden outside the thin branches of the willow swayed noiselessly, the breeze caressed them gently, the foliage gleamed a milky-silver like the colour of opals. The tree had been planted by Mercuri Avdeyevich himself, he had watered it together with Valeria Ivanovna and—just look at it—how it had grown, and how much time had passed—more than one could count or realize! To tell the truth, all the time had passed, all Mercuri Avdeyevich's time, only the shell remained. Whatever he looked at reminded him of Valeria Ivanovna. She did not seem to have occupied a very important place in the busy every-day affairs of Meshkov but when she died she seemed to have taken everything with her. But no, she had not died. Mercuri Avdeyevich called her death the Assumption, the end of her terrestrial life, he said that her soul had flown away, had been carried away on the delicate breath of the morning breeze. She did not bother even her husband with her death, she died the same as she had lived, causing nobody any trouble—she went to sleep in the evening and did not wake up again. In the morning Mercuri Avdeyevich went to her bed, bent over her and fell with his face on the cold rigid body of his wife. That had been a year before, and since then he had turned over in his mind the whole time they had lived together but he did not find anything that had occurred in their married life for which he would have to ask her pardon, except, perhaps, for the last few months. During the last months of Valeria Ivanovna's life he had oppressed her with his extravagant desire, one that grew until it became an importunity, to remove from their home every trace of beauty, every comfort, even every convenience. What did he do? There was, for instance, a picture on the wall. Mercuri Avdeyevich would squint and squint at it, walk up and down from corner to corner, hopping about strangely in his stockinged feet; then he suddenly halted, pulled the picture down from the wall, took it out of its frame and hung it back on the nail, face to the wall and crooked at that; the frame he took and hid in the loft. "Why did you do that, we've admired it so many years, what has it done to us?" Valeria Ivanovna begged for an explanation. "Don't bother, mother," Mercuri Avdeyevich would answer, "when it's worse for us, it's better for *them*." "But they can't see it!" she would exclaim. "And suppose they come, then let them see it!" he would say. Then he either unscrewed the nickel-plated knobs from the bedstead and hid them away in a box of nails, or turned the sideboard round to face the wall so that it was awkward to get at, and even ordered her not to sweep away the cobwebs but leave them as they were—all dust and dried up flies. And again the same answer: *they* want ugliness so let them admire the ugliness! He let the plants dry up, threw out the flower pots and had an oilcloth put on the table in place of the cloth: all the time he was waiting for someone who was certain to come and be surprised to see how badly he lived, that everything in his house was as miserable as it was in the house of the visitor

himself, that is, just as it should be, just as the times demanded. Nobody, however, came to visit him. This dull mania drove Valeria Ivanovna to hot tears. His common sense, however, now inclined him to believe that he had been right and, perhaps, he had nothing to answer for to the shade of his dead wife. No sooner had Valeria Ivanovna died than somebody really did appear and examine the house, yard and annexes; shortly after they municipalized the house, leaving only two rooms for him and his daughter Liza. He lived in a house that had once belonged to him and was now a mere tenant, a tenant who rented rooms, in the same way as the other tenants, an old factory worker and three medical students. He was living in a hired house, a house that belonged to *them*, and that *them* included the old worker and the students; it was true they did not own the house any more than he did but they lived as though they were the owners, lived carefree and comfortably. If Valeria Ivanovna could see them she would know whether Mercuri Avdeyevich had been right or wrong. Even the bed on which she had died was now the property of others—the old worker slept on it. It was a good thing that Mercuri Avdeyevich had taken the knobs off and thrown them out at the proper time! If he had not the factory worker would have lived like a lord. . . .

At that opal and silver hour the whole house, the former Meshkov house, was fast asleep—the lodger Liza with her lodger son, the worker lodger and the student lodgers. Lodger Mercuri Avdeyevich was the only one awake. Poring over all that had occurred, appealing to his intellect and heart to submit, Mercuri Avdeyevich took a book and a writing pad from the bookshelf, sat down at the table, dipped his pen in the little bottle of ink and muttered with an inaudible sigh:

"Be ye of good cheer, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

His library had been broken up: the soul-saving Afon tracts, including that of the recluse Theophan, he had sold or given away; his favourite treasures, the *Lives of the Saints* and the prayer book, he had recently taken to the vicar of his bishop who was awaiting better times in exile, out beyond the Monastery Quarter. He had, however, managed to save a few books which he had tucked away in various corners, deliberately tearing off covers and making the books as dirty as possible to give them the appearance of worthlessness.

The book that he was so zealously studying at the moment, he found rather peculiar but attractive because it was not by a Russian author but by some mysterious retired Colonel Van Beiningen, a Fleming or a Dutchman by nationality. Despite the foreign origin of the writer, he had convinced Mercuri Avdeyevich not only because his work met with the approval of the censor even in the fateful year 1905 (that censor certainly knew what he was doing!) but also by his undoubted unity with the spirit of the Orthodox Church, and that pacified Meshkov and provided spiritual nutriment for his mind. He was writing out a chronology, beginning with the creation of man—Adam and Eve—in the year 4152, and compared the dates given by the retired colonel with those given in the bible. He was immeasurably excited at historical names like Assurhaddon, King of Babylon and Assyria, or Phegla-phelassur. Some entries were very brief: "753. Foundation of Rome"; others were unexpectedly detailed; "713. In the course of three years Sennacherib captured all the fortified towns of Judea, Ezekiel paid 300 talents of silver (at first Mercuri Avdeyevich wrote rubles in place of talents but noticed his mistake in time and grinned when the idea came to him that he could not do much with 300 rubles in those days, why rye flour cost 300 rubles—and he scratched out the rubles with his pocketknife and continued writing) and 30 talents of gold for the promise of peace. But as he intended launching a campaign against Egypt and was afraid to leave an unconquered city behind him, he laid siege to Jerusalem. Ezekiel and the prophet Isaiah prayed to God for protection and one night 185,000 soldiers died in the Assyrian camp and Sennacherib retreated to Nineveh where he was killed by his two eldest sons and his youngest son Assurhaddon ascended the throne." The lengthy notes became more frequent as he drew nearer to the history of modern times. The Assyrians and Babylonians were replaced by Persians, Goths, unheard of Marcomans and Ale-

mans. After them the horses of the Huns arrived out of the blue. Then there arose the Lombards whose name had the martial sound of drums; these Lombards with the aid of their kings Alboin and Clef established some sort of seventh rule in confirmation of the secret prophecies and in accordance with the computations of the retired colonel. Still more dangerous things occurred, history did not sleep: "Alboin and Clef, Kings of the Lombards, were murdered by Rosamond, the wife of Alboin, the daughter of the King of the Hepides, who had been conquered and killed by the kings. In this way Rosamond avenged the insult to which she had been subjected—Alboin had forced her to drink out of the skull of her murdered father at a feast. This period of impotence lasted until the year 585." Impotence, impotence, Mercuri Avdeyevich pondered over the word as he wrote out the dates—but, look, Pope Gregory I has already formed three new kingdoms—Bavaria, Avaria and Slavonia or Czechia so that there were once more ten states within the frontiers of Rome. And so it went on: Muhammed conquered the Koreishites and forced them to adopt the new faith that he had invented and which, according to his own words, had been communicated to him by the Archangel Gabriel. There was Omar who captured Jerusalem. There was Pope Vitalius who issued a Bull forbidding all except the clergy to read the bible. There were Huss and Luther with their reformation, there was Ignatius Loyola with his Jesuits, there was Pope Gregory XIII with his new calendar (so that's where it came from, that new calendar). And farther: the Thirty Years' War, the Slovenian War, the Hussite War. How many things history has experienced! Step by step Mercuri Avdeyevich reached the year 1773 under which heading he wrote every word with a capital letter, except the last one, for it frightened him even to write such a word: "Influence of the Literature of Voltaire. The Fall of Religion and the Beginning of Open disbelief." Compared with this horrible fact, Suvorov's victories over the Turks or the destruction of the Jesuit Order by Pope Clement XIV on the demand of the powers could not help; they could not help for they were followed by the date 1793. Again the capital letters: "First French Revolution. God's First Punishment For disbelief." The Napoleonic Wars proved to be God's second punishment for the sin of disbelief and the year 1848, when Pope Pius IX fled from Rome and then was replaced on his throne by the Austrian soldiery, was the third punishment. Gradually the retired Colonel Van Beiningen led Mercuri Avdeyevich Meshkov in the footsteps of the prophets up to 1875 when there was a congress of Social Democrats in the city of Gotha. Here Mercuri Avdeyevich did not so much write as draw the big letters of mourning: "Marx, Lassal and Tolstoy—representatives of that theory." This was the funereal end of the historical path trodden by mankind and nothing was left for the retired colonel to do but open the curtains to show the future with the aid of the oracles. Here Mercuri Avdeyevich saw but little: the retired colonel appointed the year 1922 for the fall of the head and body of the Roman Church, in 1925 the Zionists were to build a Christian church; as for the last prophecy—Mercuri Avdeyevich copied it out faithfully in his notebook: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

It was not quite clear what days these were and why there were 1,335 of them—but could one hope to understand everything? How in general had everything been formed during man's presence on this earth? From Adam and Eve to Assurhaddon, from Assurhaddon to Rosamond, and then, look, there is Leo Tolstoy, and the municipalized house and unsifted rye flour at 300 rubles! Clever! Perhaps it was not within the power of even such a mind as that of retired Colonel Van Beiningen to take the chain of events apart, link by link. And there is no reason why he should. It is the unknown that is attractive, alluring, like an ever-flowing spring gushing forth from the innermost bowels of the earth. It is faith that comforts, not knowledge. Knowledge merely serves to confirm faith and where it has not been acquired—faith is all the sweeter like everything mysterious. Blessed is he that waiteth. . . .

Mercuri Avdeyevich closed the book and the writing pad. It was already morning for everybody. He heard the

old man who was a smoker, coughing, the students began to throw their boots about, the smell of the oilstove came from Liza's room, Vitya ran noisily down the stairs on his way to the baker's for bread, in the street a bucket rattled against the tub of a water-carrier. Out of the darkness of time and the unfathomable ways of the Lord, the day soberly brought his thoughts back to mundane affairs.

Mercuri Avdeyevich pulled open the drawer of his desk to see what little things, doomed to disposal, could be sent to the market that day. There were drawing pins, dried ink in pills, a couple of screwdrivers for a sewing machine, wire cutters and pliers, two or three reels of cotton, stars for a Christmas tree and packets of paint for Easter eggs. After careful deliberation he decided on the packets of paint: it was true that the season was over but Vitya was a resourceful lad, once he had sold some unearthly rubbish like the backs of tear-off calendars!—he would find somebody willing to buy paint for Easter eggs!

Mercuri Avdeyevich looked intently at his daughter when he went in to breakfast and wished her good morning. She was pale and that which he had formerly called grace, now seemed to him to be a gauntness that betokened ill. Somewhat playfully he laid the packets in front of Vitya.

"Here, business man, there's a commercial transaction for you to carry out today. . . ."

"Again?" asked Liza. "But I asked you, Dad. . . ."

"Don't you worry, Mummie, it's nothing to me," Vitya rapped out.

"The market is no place to learn anything good."

"It is a place that we cannot live without," frowned Mercuri Avdeyevich. "I did not invent the new system. I did not push prices up. Is there anything left in the house but millet? Perhaps you have some money? If so. . . ."

"But I tell you, Vitya should not go to the market."

"D'you order me to go myself? It is not a very great disgrace, of course, if a former merchant stands in the market to exchange an empty pocket for one with nothing in it. The whole trouble is that in addition to being an ex-merchant I am at present a Soviet clerk. Say what you will, I am the 'Comrade Manager', I manage the shop. What do *you* want, d'you want them to accuse *me* of speculation?"

"I don't want Victor to go to the market. It will end badly."

"Everything will end badly as I've been saying for a long time. Not for everybody, though," said Meshkov and, appealing to himself to submit, he recalled the text: "Blessed is he that readeth and heareth these words of prophecy and follows that which is written in it, for the time is at hand."

Liza was silent for a moment and then spoke without raising her eyes.

"Then Vitya goes to the market for the last time today."

"We'll see," said Meshkov.

"We'll see," said Liza quietly as though she were in complete agreement with him.

He could not stand any further admonition, got up, took his glass and went into his own room.

She watched him as he went. His back was badly bent as though a cushion had been pushed under his collar. The back of his head was quite grey. He had become thin and weedy and there was a trace of injured dignity as he walked about on tiptoe.

"Good Lord, how quickly he has aged," thought Liza, and as had often been the case in the last year, again she felt sorry for her father to the point of sadness. But she did not leave her place.

6

Liza was troubled all that day. It seemed to her a misfortune was bound to occur, and this was not a premonition that came suddenly and would die away unexplained, but a persistent feeling of a weight on her shoulders, of pain that held her whole body in its grip. She did not go to work. Gradually she convinced herself that her son would get into trouble. He had gone out in the morning and had not returned.

On the way home to dinner Mercuri Avdeyevich met Pavlik Parabukin; Pavlik told him that Vitya was not at home and he ordered Pavlik to send his grandson home to dinner if he should see him. When he saw his daughter Mercuri Avdeyevich coughed guiltily. She said casually that Vitya was probably read-

ing at Arseni Romanych's and had forgotten the time. The fact that she restrained herself and did not show that she was worried made Mercuri Avdeyevich feel all the more guilty and he sat in silence with knitted brows.

After a rest he was getting ready to go out again when Pavlik came running in, scarcely able to catch his breath and shooting his golden eyes first at Liza then at Meshkov; he was just able to stutter out that they had taken Vitya.

"What d'you mean, taken? Who's taken him?"

"They made a raid on the market and all the people who were selling things were all swept up clean."

"Swept up? What are you talking about?" Liza managed to get out and clutched the chair behind her so tightly that it made her fingernails white.

"They swept everybody who was on the market into a courtyard and there they're sorting 'em out, some go to the militia and others somewhere else."

"But where's Victor, where's Victor?"

"He's there with 'em!"

"At the militia station?"

"No, not at the militia, in the courtyard, I tell you!"

"And were you with him?"

"I was, I skedaddled but they copped him."

Tearing her hands away from the chair at last, Liza ran to the bed and took her shawl, threw it down again, opened the wardrobe and began searching amongst the dresses muttering all the while—"wait, wait, you can show me where to go, Pasha, wait . . ." Mercuri Avdeyevich took her by the hand, led her to a chair and sat her down.

"There's no need for you to go. . . I'll bring Victor."

She was so distraught that she got up again. He pressed his hand heavily on her shoulder and shouted at her.

"Sit down! I'm responsible for what has happened! I'll go."

He walked so fast that Pavlik almost had to run to keep up with him. It was a long way but Mercuri Avdeyevich knew every corner post: it was not so very long ago that he had walked this way every day to his booth in the Upper Market. He moved with fixed determination, as though setting out for a trial, tapping the pavement with a thin cane in the same way as he had formerly tapped it with a rich, knobbed walking stick that was now hidden out of sight of unworthy eyes.

"There," Pavlik showed him a crowd of people in a space between the rows of brick buildings in the market, "there is where the militia are, that's where they drove 'em."

Mercuri Avdeyevich slackened his pace and no longer tapped with his cane. He went past a row of closed shops with rusty padlocks on the doors (where kerosene and soap were formerly sold), pushing through a mixed crowd that was waiting for something and eyeing the militiamen who were guarding the gate that had formerly been the entrance for wagons. One of the militiamen was young and smart, still beardless and apparently content with duties that brought him into the limelight. The other beside him was short in stature, important looking, with a sort of a devil-may-care whiskers sticking out like a cat's. Both of them looked at Mercuri Avdeyevich with unerring eyes.

"I've come about my grandson, comrades. My grandson got caught in the round-up by accident," pleaded Meshkov, approaching carefully and raising his cap.

"Nobody gets caught by accident," answered the young militiaman.

"Why not? He never dreamed of such a thing and then he suddenly gets caught. Quite an accident and completely unexpected both by his mother and by me, a poor old man."

"Is he of age?"

"What?"

"Is your grandson of age?"

"Oh, I say, comrade! He's only a mere slip of a kid, why he's smaller than this boy," said Meshkov pointing to Pavlik.

"What's he trading on the market for when the milk hasn't dried on his lips?"

Pavlik wiped his lips with his fingers and turned away challengingly.

"What d'you mean—trading?" Mercuri Avdeyevich was scared and even raised his hand to cross himself but refrained in good time. "Mischief that's all, nothing more. They're just a couple of kids, that grandson of mine and this chum of his. They want some fishhooks or a bird cage. And so they rummage about the market—where else can they

get anything? They're just kids, what d'you want from them?"

"What do I want from them!" exclaimed the short militiaman, menacingly nodding his head so that his moustache stuck out like arrows.

"What can you ask of them?" said Meshkov confidingly, looking at the militiaman's red tabs with respect. "These are not the old days, you know that yourself. Formerly I would have whipped him. But today you mustn't lift a finger: they're children."

"Whipped!" put in Pavlik with a sudden haughtiness. "And what's he done wrong? What have fishing rods and birds to do with it?"

He frowned at Meshkov disdainfully, half turned towards the militiamen and ended up with a crushing phrase.

"You don't know life!"

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Mercuri Avdeyevich severely, pulling at Pavlik's sleeve. "What can you do with such boys?"

"They ought to be in the reformatory," said the militiaman and smiled at Pavlik.

"Who are you, citizen?" asked the young man.

"Soviet worker. I had to keep away from work in order to help out my grandson."

"Children are being sorted out at the other gate," said the man with the moustache. "I'll take you there across the yard."

The young militiaman opened the gate. Pavlik wanted to slip through after Mercuri Avdeyevich but he was stopped and went sulkily away, studying the disposition of the dead shops that formed a whole block.

The courtyard was full of extraordinary people. As you looked at them you felt that a cosmic disturbance had taken place in the world—mountains had abandoned their places and stalked abroad like living beings, peaks had collapsed, cliffs had tumbled into the abyss and one of the splinters of a rock, flying God alone knew whither, had broken off and dropped into that tightly-closed cupboard called the Upper Market. The crowd of ragged, decrepit traders by misfortune, mixed together with experienced swindlers, pickpockets and the unemployed minor aristocracy of the underworld, they all waited to see what fate would bring them. The variety of faces was incalculable: some of them looked painfully at the sky, their faces like the countenances of people praying for a sign from heaven; others turned their heads contemptuously from side to side as though those around them were parasites they wished to brush off; there were some who turned eyes sharp as needles on everybody else, as much as to say—somebody's in for it but we'll never be caught, not we! There were some who stood with their chins haughtily stuck out, as though they had been dethroned but still felt the crowns on their heads; there were some who glanced round the shoulders of their neighbours with doglike eyes uncertain whether the master would kick them or just push them aside; and there were those who sarcastically emitted poisonous tobacco smoke as though to say—we may be trodden underfoot today but we'll see who's on the horse tomorrow; there were even some who enjoyed the unlimited freedom of those who scoff at themselves no less than at everybody else, and who, having fallen to the lowest depths had the air of sitting in high places. In a word it was the illegal market that had fallen into trouble, anxious to get out of it, prepared to defend property that had been thrust into pockets and inside jackets—worn underclothes, grandmother's buttons and buckles, stolen Red Army rations, muslin curtains, boots and bootleg spirit, dream books, and icons.

"I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as they," Mercuri Avdeyevich sighed and shuddered and immediately corrected himself with the humble words of a righteous publican. "Forgive me my sins, oh Lord."

Huddled together by themselves in a corner of the yard stood the youngsters, the adolescents and the children, like a crowd of impudent kids that had been kept in after school. Mercuri Avdeyevich thought of looking for Vitya immediately, but the militiaman led him into a brick building where a calm and dreamy man in a black leather cap was judging, as his conscience dictated, all those who had been guilty of an infringement of law and order.

"And who are you?" he asked an unkempt Mordvinian with shifty eyes who stood before him.

Illustration to Nikolai Gogol's Taras Bulba *A. Gerassimov*

"Coalman, char, char, charcoal! Charcoal for *samovars* I used to sell from my cart. Now I got no horse, got no cart, got no char, char, charcoal, got nothing. Tried to sell my last pair of bootsoles."

"Why are you speculating in tsarist money!"

"What tsarist money?"

"I'm asking you! Why did you price your bootsoles in tsarist currency?"

"How I know what money customer got in his pocket? I ask what money you pay for bootsoles? Tsar's money—give me ten rubles, Kerensky—give me hundred, Soviet money—give me thousand."

"And isn't that speculation if you think Soviet money is worth the least?"

"Why least?" shouted the Mordvinian indignantly. "Dear Comrade! Tsar's money bad money, tsar's money no use at all, only want a little, only ten rubles. Kerensky money little better so I want more, want hundred rubles. Soviet money very good, nothing better than Soviet money—me want more, want thousand!"

The calm man smiled, winked slyly at the Mordvinian and said to him:

"You're not so simple, are you, char, char, charcoal? So you like Soviet money, do you? Give more, eh?"

He ordered the militiamen to take the Mordvinian away and turned to Meshkov. Mercuri Avdeyevich told him respectfully the whole story.

"What's the boy's name?"

"Shubnikov."

"Shubnikov?" asked the man and paused. "Is he from the Shubnikov family whose sign hangs here in the market?"

"A distant relative," answered Mercuri Avdeyevich, excusing himself. "The grandnephew of the late Darya Antonovna."

"I'm asking you, is he one of those Shubnikovs? Is he the son of the one the shops belonged to?"

"His father abandoned the boy, though. I've had the upbringing of him for years, in place of his father," said Meshkov.

"Have you got any papers?"

Mercuri Avdeyevich pulled out a carefully folded sheet of paper. The militiaman with the moustache leaned over the shoulder of the quiet man, to make out the typescript in which damaged letters had been corrected with a pen.

"Meshkov," he read aloud, twitching his moustache menacingly. "You had a paint store in the neighbouring row?"

"Ach, you," thought Meshkov, "your memory seems to be as long as your whiskers!" and he sighed plaintively.

"That was so long ago!"

"And you wish it was still yours?" asked the militiaman.

"I've finished with shopkeeping. It's not worth the trouble," answered Meshkov.

The calm man spent some time running through the lists of names that had been hurriedly drawn up in pencil, found the name Shubnikov and put a tick against it.

"Here he is. A packet of Easter egg paint was found in his possession."

He paused, thickened the lines of his tick, and then continued, thoughtfully and didactically.

"You're spreading superstition. You try to make profit out of ignorance. It's time to drop the old ideas. Take your grandson away this time. Next time you won't get off so easily. Your trading establishment will be kept under observation."

"My humble thanks," answered Meshkov, and meekly removed his cap, immediately donned it again and bowed, and then added quickly, "Many thanks, comrade."

Outside the yard the militiaman went to the crowd to call Shubnikov's name but the boy had already noticed his grandfather from a distance and ran towards him; Vitya was pale, there were yellow rings under his eyes, but he was glad and more impudent than ever.

They were let out into the street. No sooner were they through the gates when Pavlik appeared from somewhere and flew to Vitya, linked arms with his friend, and the two boys marched side by side in step, whispering excitedly. Relieved, Mercuri Avdeyevich walked behind them. His step became more jaunty, he stroked his beard and tapped along with his cane like a young dandy. Not only had the storm passed but he had stood up under the blow, taken it on himself; he was like a lightning conductor and if the boy had really been saved Mercuri Avdeyevich had every right to call himself his saviour.

Liza came to meet them when she heard her son's shrill voice and almost slid down the stairs very much in the same way as she used to slide down the banisters in a burst of joy when she was a little girl; she threw her arms round

Vitya and repeated several times over, selflessly and impatiently:

"I'll never let you go anywhere again, never, never, not for anything will I let you go again!"

Her father interrupted her.

"God be praised, God be praised!"

Vitya broke away from his mother who stubbornly tried to keep hold of him and in a few words described what had happened, why he had not managed to get away, how he had been arrested and taken to the yard under escort, where all the names were taken, and how everybody had tried to get rid of food which it was forbidden to sell. Then he broke away, walked over to the table in silence, dragged out of his pocket a piece of fat bacon half covered by newspaper that had stuck to it, and placed it proudly on the table in view of all. Pavlik regarded his friend as though he were a hero.

"How did you manage it?" asked his grandfather.

"Devil take the bacon," said Liza placing her arms against the door jamb and burying her face in her hands.

"I got it when I was already in the yard," continued Vitya exultantly. "There was a woman who was just scared to death she'd go to clink. She had a bag half full of bacon. She changed it for anything she could lay her hands on, as fast as ever she could. I asked her if she wanted the paint. She said they'd take it away from her, anyway, and pushed a lump of bacon into my hands. There must be a pound there, eh, granddad? When they began making the list of names, the militiaman asked me what I was selling and I told him, nothing, all I had was the packet of paint. He took it, looked at me, but didn't say anything."

"What a lad!" repeated the grandfather, approvingly.

He went into his own room and a minute later returned, triumphantly carrying in a tin box of acid drops.

"Here," he said, excited at his own munificence, "I had been saving this for your birthday. Take it. You have earned it today."

He made his grandson a ceremonial presentation of the box, took up the bacon and began carefully removing the newspaper from it. Vitya looked at his mother.

"No, no," Liza immediately understood that glance and put out her shaking, delicate hands as though defending herself. "No, no, I don't even want to see that bacon!"

"Why not?" asked Mercuri Avdeyevich, rather annoyed with her. "We'll eat it together, I won't cheat you," and he took it to his own room.

"Granddad, will you please give me some of your gummed paper?" asked Vitya stopping him. "You know, the gummed strips you have for mending paper. I need some, you know. . . ."

As he spoke he pulled up his shirt, unbuckled his belt and pulled out into the broad daylight the tattered book that he had hidden safely against his stomach.

". . . the pages have to be gummed together a bit."

"Fine reader you are! You little rogue. And how did you know what your grandfather's got and what he hasn't," said Mercuri Avdeyevich, still feeling magnanimous.

He was in an exalted mood: his grandson had acquired some not very praiseworthy inclinations (he did not fear his elders today and there was a danger in the future he would not even fear God, and the fear of God is the foundation of the universe); however, life was such that there was no demand for timidity but rather for resourcefulness, and in this respect Vitya did not seem likely to bite the dust—he was bold and clever, before you can look round he will go out into the world and take all obstacles in his stride. It was hardly possible that the future could upset the wise, age-old canons by which Mercuri Avdeyevich judged all people—the ability of man to make his way in life. Of course, according to the prophecies the end of the world must be close at hand and all mankind, whether properly ordered or not, would be plunged into the nethermost depths. But suppose the "at hand" is not so soon, after all? Suppose it lasts, say, a whole generation or even two? What then? The earth is still the earth. Let the stray sheep on this sinful planet live in lawlessness. Lawlessness is lawlessness, but the laws of the earth cannot be ignored; a man must get on in the world. It was in this respect that Vitya's ingeniousness would stand him in good stead. A fine boy, a sprightly lad, one might

say, even if he does not take kindly to education.

For the rest of the day Mercuri Avdeyevich remained in a state of blissful content. He had a feeling that he had rid himself of some danger and had even managed to outmanoeuvre somebody. A day that had begun badly, however, could not end in joy and comfort.

When Meshkov came home at twilight he found Vitya alone. He was sitting on the windowsill—his bare feet pressed against one side of the window frame and his back against the other, his eyes glued on a book resting against his knees. A glass jar stood on a shelf made for flowerpots: in it were some sprigs of tender green poplar with a curliness that betokened spring. Little fat leaves, the size of a fingernail, filled the room with a faint sweetness.

"Where's mummie?" asked Mercuri Avdeyevich.

"Mummie's gone for a walk. He came . . . that fellow who works in her office. Mummie laughed and said she was always at home, that she had had enough of it and wanted to go out for a walk."

"Oh. And what's this, a gift, this, er, bunch of twigs in the jar?"

Apparently the bouquet was a gift.

"Doesn't she realize that somebody may come from the office to find out why she hasn't been to work?"

Vitya could not answer that question but apparently it was true that mummie didn't realize it.

"Here she is, gone out for a walk,"—Mercuri Avdeyevich wouldn't give in—"and doesn't even think that somebody might see her. In the old days they would say she was dodging work. Then you could dodge as much as you liked without being afraid of anything. But what are you told today? Sabotage! And if it's sabotage they begin to ask questions: who's her husband? Who's her father?"

Nor could Vitya say anything to this, except that it was a fact that they really could ask why Liza hadn't gone to work, but had gone out for a stroll instead, and who were her nearest relations—is it not that Meshkov, Mercuri Avdeyevich, who is under surveillance for sending his grandson to sell things on the market? How would you squirm out of that, eh?

There was another trouble added to this one: that night it was Meshkov's tour of duty as night watchman in their block. It was obligatory for all the inhabitants, as a self-defence measure and he, of course, was an inhabitant, an inhabitant of a communal apartment and nothing more. He always looked forward to these nights with alarm, afraid that it might be his last; he might be killed. He did not show his fear but the fear made him turn cold and he was constantly worried by the feeling of an unpleasant necessity to breathe more deeply.

Formerly Valeria Ivanovna had always got him ready for his nights on guard. She had helped him on with his worn thick coat, his moth-eaten caracul cap, had prepared ready for him his worn-out galoshes and watchman's cudgel, had made the sign of the cross over him and kissed him as he left, and he had gone out into the night with a prayer on his lips. After her mother's death Liza had taken on herself the duty of seeing her father off. This would be the first time that he had had to set off on his dangerous duty without a comforting farewell.

He waited for Liza to the very last moment, told Victor to go to bed in order not to waste kerosene for the lamp, armed himself with his cudgel and went to the chairman of the House Committee of the Poor to get his whistle. There he chattered a short while, gossiping about the hungry times they were living in, that the greatest horrors were still to come, said good night and plunged into the night as though it were into a hole in the river ice.

All around it was pitch dark and silent. The pavements were invisible from the middle of the road. The front gardens with their acacias and lilac trees stood in a menacing gloom. The earth was still exuding the spring cold. Mercuri Avdeyevich weighed the cudgel in his hand and turned the thick end towards the ground: which way would it be easier to hit somebody with it in case of his being attacked? He took the whistle out of his pocket and blew it to see whether it was clogged up or not. But anyway, if he really was attacked, wouldn't it be better to throw the cudgel away, take off his coat, cap, everything down to the last rag—take them and God help you, but let my soul rest in peace!

The chief mental burden that accompanied Meshkov on these walks as night watchman was this very cudgel. As he pressed it into the soft velvety dust of the road, he did not see himself as a watchman but as a thief setting out to try his luck on the broad highway. No, it was not with this cudgel that the property that had once belonged to him, to Meshkov had been protected, it was not with this whistle that the housebreakers and looters had been scared. It was not his own cudgel that Mercuri Avdeyevich was now carrying, not his whistle that he blew or his law and order that he protected.

He called to mind the watchmen who used to come round with greetings at Christmas and Easter, and he had given them a ruble tip for the holidays. They had been poor and shabby. There was one old fellow whose chest had played a soft and soothing music all the time he breathed and who boasted importantly that it was a rare disease, incurable and granted to him for life in place of a medal. He put the tips under the lining in his cap, smiling with a mouth that was as black as his cap and without a single tooth.

And now Mercuri Avdeyevich was forced to become a watchman, the lowest of creatures. The only difference was that nobody pampered him by giving him rubles at holiday times. And why should he be pampered? The old watchmen were of much more use, they knew whom they were protecting, and whom was Mercuri Avdeyevich protecting? A cudgel had been shoved into his old hands—protect, cherish, guard *their* law and order, Citizen Meshkov, blow *their* whistle, stand on guard over *them*, Meshkov.

In this way, turning one and the same thing over and over in his mind, he walked round the whole block until he came back to his own house and halted there. He allowed his glance to remain fixed on the house, trying to guess in the darkness where the well-known carved wooden window frames, the steep iron roof and the brick chimneys were. The house was getting dilapidated. And so quickly: if the house has been ruined in two years, what must have happened to man in that time?

Mercuri Avdeyevich wiped his face with a cold hand: his hard, cord-like eyebrows, his sunken temples, his neglected beard, his Adam's apple that dived up and down like a protruding shuttle under it. A man wears out as well as a house. And again the same thoughts: nobody's house. *Their* house. Communal. Anybody's. The former house of Mercuri Meshkov. The house in which every board had been bathed in his sweat. For one little nail in the weather boarding he, Meshkov, had gone short of food. For another he had gone short of drink. He had not slept his fill. Had not ridden on the horse trams. Had not bought a roll for his tea. Had not given his daughter sunflower seeds. Had told his wife not to make jam: we're going to build a house. So it had been day after day, brick by brick. Now it was *their* house, municipalized, converted into common property, nobody's. Cold was wafted from the earth. Not a soul about. A pitch-black night.

Suddenly Mercuri Avdeyevich heard voices—a man's voice followed by a woman's. Quiet. Silence. Scarcely visible in the darkness two figures merged together, leaning towards each other, appeared. Closer and closer. Their footsteps now were quite audible. The woman spoke and Meshkov recognized his daughter's voice. It was strangely insinuating and the tender timbre of it astounded Mercuri Avdeyevich. He could not distinguish the words but the modulations of the voice were strikingly alluring in his ears and he continued to hear them even after Liza has stopped talking.

Then the man spoke. It was that man from the notary's office, the man who worked together with Liza, a former clerk of the court. The one who had brought her a bunch of young sprigs because there were no flowers. A sugary tenor, if you please! Mercuri Avdeyevich began to tremble: it was chilly standing still on the cold earth. He caught his breath: that fellow from the notary's office—Oznobishin was his name, Oznobishin! The sugary tenor called Liza "dear." So that's how matters stood! His daughter Liza had run away from her lawful husband, had taken his son away from him, she feared neither God nor man, but went out freely in the night and returned to her father's house arm in arm with her lover!

And this for all your great troubles, Mercuri, that's what you get in your old age! Play the fool in the streets at night,

walk around with a little whistle, protect your own shame, your humiliation so that—God forbid!—nobody should interfere with your own daughter Liza kissing her boy friend at the gate! They're kissing, are they? There they go, again and again, count them father, if you're not too lazy. . . .

Perhaps Mercuri Avdeyevich was imagining it all in the dark? A pitch-black night. Fearsome.

But why this sham consolation: it was all true! Liza had said good-bye to her escort, the latch on the gate had clattered home, and her notarial wooer, Oznobishin, had gone his way, walking along the middle of the road.

Mercuri Avdeyevich followed behind him, treading softly. Feeling with his foot for the rut in the road that was filled with soft powdery dust, he moved in perfect silence. His hands were trembling. Again he weighed up the cudgel, which end would be the most convenient to take hold of. Shuddering, he wondered what would be the best way to hurl the cudgel—at the head or the legs?

For a moment he felt so terribly dizzy that he stood still. Oznobishin immediately disappeared into the gloom. If Meshkov were to throw the cudgel at him now it would be difficult to find it again. Without his cudgel it would be still worse.

Mercuri Avdeyevich screwed up his eyes. A sudden wave of heat spread over his face. He slowly crossed himself and stood still afraid to open his eyes again. Surely he would not be able to kill a man? A man that perhaps his daughter loved? But then it was all the same who the man was. In the street. At night. Like a thief. The power of the cross is with us!

With an effort he opened his eyes. Out of the depths of the darkness a patch of light was approaching him, swaying back and forth, its narrow beam shining with first a small and then a larger circle on the road, the garden fences and the houses. It disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared and the darkness became still blacker, dull voices could be heard indistinctly. Mercuri Avdeyevich turned back in order to hide in the yard, but he had only just time to reach the fence when the light of the torch fell on him and blinded him, and he began to move instinctively towards it.

Several men, talking amongst themselves, came right up to Meshkov.

"Good evening, watchman!" said one of them.

Meshkov recognized the workers' picket, he could see the rifles slung across the men's backs, the cartridge pouches on their belts, but they wore no uniforms, everybody was in his every-day clothes.

"Greetings," answered Meshkov, humbly.

"That's not the way to answer," said a young voice.

"How must I answer, tell me, brothers?" asked Meshkov.

"You must answer: 'I serve the Revolution, comrades.'"

"Did you see who passed here?" asked the first voice.

"I didn't see anybody."

"And didn't you see this fellow?"

The torch beam turned from Meshkov, settled down opposite him and in the bright light he saw the yellowish-red face of Oznobishin. Liza's cavalier stood there motionless and his blue, submissive eyes were moist.

"I didn't see that fellow either," said Meshkov in a scarcely audible voice.

"Then you keep your eyes open. This citizen's night pass has expired."

They all turned about and walked off in a compact crowd, throwing the light on the ground before them, their rifle barrels swaying behind them.

"Good night, uncle, keep your eyes open," shouted the young man.

"I serve the Revolution, Comrades," answered Mercuri Avdeyevich; his heart was beating furiously: thank God, that was over!

He was once more enveloped in the silent darkness. He felt the tears rolling down his cheeks. Tears of mortification, bitter tears. He rubbed them away with his fist and walked towards the house.

When he could see the lamplight in Liza's windows, the gate opened with a sharp rattling of the latch. Vitya came flying out, looked round and then shouted out loud:

"Granddad!"

"Here I am. What are you shouting for? What's the matter?"

"Come home quick, granddad. Mummie's sick."

"What—how sick?"

"Come on, come on, she sent for you."

He caught hold of Mercuri Avdeyevich's fingers, squeezed them hard, and pulled his grandfather along, not letting

go of his fingers as they walked, almost ran, stumbling across the yard; Meshkov also squeezed the boy's fingers and in this pressure of hands—the big and the small—there was a sign of greater fear than that which Mercuri Avdeyevich had just experienced in the street, than anything he had experienced throughout that day of misfortunes.

Liza was lying fully dressed on her bed, her chin pushed up high in the air. A towel, spotted with blood and something black, had half fallen from the bed and hung down to the floor. Her pale eyes were unbelievably large and Mercuri Avdeyevich, looking into them, felt that his legs would not support him. He sat down uncertainly on the bed at his daughter's feet, just as he was, cudgel in hand, cap on head, and stared at her without saying a word.

A student from the neighbouring room was zealously mixing something with a teaspoon in a tumbler. Wisps of hair, white as flour, hung like sticks of macaroni from his knit brows and waved in time to his movements. He apparently thought the silence in the room was a question put to him and he began to speak in the beaming, hypnotic tones that he had acquired from traditional bedside manners of the past:

"The phenomenon which we note at the present moment. . . ."

But he could not keep it up and finished his speech with a few rapidly spoken words:

"Don't you worry, there's nothing serious, we'll put it right in no time."

"Liza, what's the matter?" began Mercuri Avdeyevich, stretching out his hand to his daughter and touching her with the greatest care, as though the mere touch of his fingers might cause her pain.

She beckoned him with a glance. He squatted down beside her on his heels. She spoke in a whisper with painful pauses between her words.

"Let Vitya . . . run for Anatoli Mikhalych. . . He lives round the corner. . . ."

"For the doctor? Round which corner?" he asked in a hurry to find out what she meant.

"For Oznobishin. . . Let Vitya . . . bring him."

Mercuri Avdeyevich wanted to object but words failed him.

"On the corner opposite Arseni Romanych. . . ."

"But, Liza, it's night!" Mercuri Avdeyevich forced himself to say, trying to drive away the vision of a yellowish-red face with submissive eyes. "But he's a child. Someone may molest him. How can you send him?"

"Vitya . . . tell him . . . to come . . . with you . . . immediately. . . ."

"I'm not scared, granddad," said Vitya, also in a whisper.

"But you don't even know the address. How will you find him in such darkness? And what do you want that Oznobishin for, anyway? You need a doctor, Liza!"

"Vitya . . ." she whispered again.

"But Vitya has no night pass!" exclaimed Mercuri Avdeyevich beseechingly. "And perhaps that Oznobishin hasn't got a pass either! Perhaps he isn't even at home! It's night now!"

Suddenly Liza coughed, thrust her pointed chin still higher and sank into immobility as if she were a cup filled to the overflowing and she feared to spill the contents with the slightest movement. The black strip that had appeared at the corner of her lips crawled slowly down towards her neck.

"I'll find him, mummie," cried Vitya, suddenly, and ran out of the room.

"It's nothing," said the student excitedly, tossing his wisps of macaroni hair on to his forehead and handing Liza the glass with a trembling hand, "We'll stop it immediately."

Mercuri Avdeyevich sank onto the bed.

"There's nothing that can be stopped now," he said in a broken shaking voice. "Nothing. . . ."

7

Ragozin slept with the window open. While he was still asleep he could hear the rattling of buckets and the murmur of the women's chatter: the housewives had met at the pump and the oral chronicle of that block had begun for the day.

He thrust his hands behind his head, seized the iron railings of the bed head, stretched himself, and, still without opening his eyes recalled what he had to do for that day: he had been appointed to the town commission for checking up on people who had been arrested and a carriage would be sent to take him to the prison. For many years now he had been

entrusted with such a variety of jobs that he was accustomed to the idea that he must always be on the move, that there was always a new job waiting for him. Before the Revolution he had had to transport arms, documents or the Party press by cleverly cunning and roundabout ways. After the Revolution his duties had grown in number by leaps and bounds, his world that had been hidden away in a molehole had been hurled to the surface by the explosion and life now was going on not only within sight of everybody but all over, about them, all around them, over their heads, over their caps, over the roofs, like thunder in spring. Everything became of vital importance, he had to be everywhere at once, and everywhere he had to keep well within sight instead of remaining invisible, so that wherever he appeared, at the railway depot, in the barracks, in the hospital or in a factory, everybody knew that the boss was around. In these new and unexpected places he always felt himself at home, like an experienced traveller bivouacking for the night.

Ragozin got up and went to the window. The pure clear blue of the morning flooded the peaceful trees of the courtyard. In the distant heavens long strips of smoky grey mist lay piled one on the others. The soil had already warmed up and one could feel the warmth exuded by the earth. Sparrows preened their feathers, hopped about daringly round the puddle by the pump, twittering as best they could. A fierce raven sat on the flagstaff with its black beady eyes fixed on the sparrows, occasionally emitting short cries like the croaking of a frog.

Ragozin was pleased at such a fine morning and was sorry that he would have to put off a fine plan he had made on account of the job he had been given—he wanted to seek out Kirill Izvekov who had just arrived in town, and spend a few hours at leisure with him. He had heard of Kirill's arrival only a short time before—he had heard that Kirill had been appointed secretary to the Town Soviet and that the authorities were looking for an apartment for him. Ragozin had not seen Kirill since that time, nine years ago, when the business with the underground printshop had come to light and they had both been sent for trial. Ragozin was threatened with a term in a fortress but he had escaped in time and had gone into hiding for some five years in the Volga towns on the lower reaches—from Astrakhan to Nizhni Novgorod; then he had moved along the Oka, had got a job at the Kolomensk factory, had lived under a false name in the house of a Golutvino citizen, had earned the reputation of being an ardent angler and just before the Revolution had been sent to Petrograd. He knew but little about Izvekov. After a term of exile in Olonetsk Gubernia Kirill had been connected with the Bolsheviks' army organization and in 1917 his name had appeared in the newspapers—he had come from the front to a Congress of Soldiers' Deputies and had spoken at the congress at the very moment when Ragozin had been sent to Kronstadt. When Ragozin returned to Petrograd, Izvekov had already gone. Again he heard nothing of him for two years, neither in the places he had been before he was sent to Saratov, as a man who knew the town inside out, nor in the town itself, where nobody had any clear recollection of Izvekov. And who could indeed have known anything about a boy who had landed up in prison straight from school and had then disappeared, without leaving a trace, into the distant northland, amidst the swamps and dense forests of the uninhabited lake district? Ragozin thought that Kirill would be curious enough to want to see the prison where he had received his baptism of suffering, and, perhaps, it would not be a bad idea to begin their renewed friendship that way—let Kirill look for the cell in which he had been imprisoned, and Ragozin would look for the one in which he had sat in 1905, and both of them would remember where their hardening had begun. He was thoroughly amused by the idea of going to Izvekov after not having seen him for nine years and proposing that he go on an excursion to the city jail.

He laughed loudly, left the window and walked over to the mirror; he ran his two hands over his head and, as he saw himself in the glass, he thought of friendship as something capricious and wondered whether Izvekov would take a fancy to a rather bald and wrinkled old man, with plenty of grey hairs and a curly moustache. He felt the water in the bucket. During the night it had become warm. He threw it out and, taking the empty bucket, left the room. The housewife of the place where he was living, wearing a brightly

coloured dressing gown, was pounding something in a mortar. She greeted him without looking up and said approvingly:

"Going for a bath, Pyotr Petrovich?"

"Just a little swim round in the bucket," he answered, and ran on down the stairs with the pail clattering in his hand.

The sparrows darted up from the puddle like splashes from a stone thrown into a pool, the raven on the flagpole cringed in fear but thought better of its original idea of flying off and simply croaked boldly to express its indignation. The water from the pump splashed sonorously against the bottom of the bucket; the sound deepened in tone and then went on and on up the scale, going through the whole range of tones from a dull rumble to a gurgling splash as the water rose to the top of the bucket and ran over the edge painting the sides with glittering streams of silver. Pyotr Petrovich was unable to restrain himself. He placed his cupped hand under the pump, splashed water in his face and on his bald head—once, twice, three times. "Caw-caw!" the raven on the flagstaff suddenly grew angry and he turned to it and said: "Water? Water, you say? All right you shall have some!" He laughed, cupped his hands again to throw water at the frightened bird. He let go of the pump, took the brimming-full bucket, and without stopping to wipe the water off his face, ran upstairs.

Standing naked in a basin he poured water over himself from a jug, groaning a little from the cold that gripped his whole body. He was tall and although he had a slight stoop, his knuckles still reached the low ceiling of his modest room as he dried himself with a coarse linen towel. While he was sipping his tea, he heard the clatter of hoofs that announced the arrival of a buggy at the gates; he hurriedly swallowed the remainder of his breakfast and again descended the stairs at a run. There was something young, supple and unpretentious about him, in the worker's cap that had become a sign of democracy since the Revolution, his Russian shirt and unbuttoned jacket, of a material that was either blue gone black or black grown lighter with age. He sat back on the cracked leather cushions of a buggy, whose coachwork had lost its sheen and been rubbed till it was a rusty hue, as though it was not really essential for him to ride in a vehicle that had formerly belonged to a merchant or a lawyer or somebody, and that before you could say "Jack Robinson", he might jump out and stride along the road with his longish, slightly bandy legs.

Springing and swaying over the cobblestones he pondered over his day's work, how he would set about a task that seemed—even to a man who had seen much in his time—unpleasant and requiring deep thought. The commission that had been appointed was large and a mixed one of representatives of various organizations—he was the seventh and had been appointed chairman. The job was to check up on all those that had been detained by the militia, on the places in which they had been detained, the reasons given for their arrest and on whether or not the actions of the authorities had been justified. The commission was authorized to release the prisoners, to pass the cases on to other authorities, to transfer them from lower to higher judicial bodies, it could demand the acceleration of the preliminary investigation, in a word—the commission had greater authority than even the Public Prosecutor's Office and more power than anybody except the court itself. Ragozin decided that the members of the commission must interrogate the prisoners one by one and in indisputable and simple cases would make preliminary decisions, while the more difficult cases would be set aside for the whole commission to examine together. His plan of work was quite ready by the time he arrived at the prison gates.

He tapped at the bars of the little window which opened immediately. He gave his name and as the bolts rattled he looked up at the gates. They had once been green but had since been painted in reddish ochre; he thought he even recognized the herringbone design running up the sides to the top and as he stepped through the open wicket he realized that his thoughts were wandering in two directions—he wanted to think about the matter in hand but his mind led him away in recollections and the more he tried to concentrate on his work, the greater was his confusion.

He looked over the empty prison yard with its hard-beaten dusty earth. This patch of prison soil was as bare and fruitless as it was the first time he saw it, when he had unwillingly paid in blood for a merciless system that he intended

upsetting, and which now no longer existed. He has spent more than ten years of his life avoiding these bare patches of earth that were like pockmarks on the faces of cities and towns and he was almost astonished that the well-known yard had not become covered with grass, had not come to life and blossomed forth. He cast his eyes over the square windows of the dismal whitewashed prison buildings: behind which of those barred windows had he paid his tribute in blood? Behind which of them had his little Ksana ended her days? Behind which of them had his comrades sat wrapped in bitter, evil and good thoughts, comrades whom he remembered and whom he had forgotten, those whom he had known for years and those whom he had never seen? The dark windows looked out sightlessly, the dead-white walls stood untrammelled as though they were pretending that the space behind them was empty, that they were without breath or thoughts. It was probable that nowhere else in the world were there walls behind which so much thinking went on every hour, every second, where thoughts were so heatedly bitter and so pointless and why—Ragozin asked himself—did people still have to languish behind them?

"People? Those are not the people!" he suddenly and sharply ridiculed his own question and, tearing his eyes off the prison buildings, he again gathered his thoughts and strode off with a worried expression to meet a group coming towards him.

"Well, are we all here?" he asked as he shook hands with them all. "Still one missing? Shall we wait for him or shall we begin?"

They went into the inner courtyard to the office of the prison—or the house of detention, as it was now called—made arrangements concerning the way in which they would work, and Ragozin was left alone in a small room with bars at the doors and windows.

He was brought a pile of papers. He divided them up into approximately equal numbers, ordered them to be distributed amongst the members of the commission and began examining those that fell to his lot. The papers contained the statements recorded from the depositions of those who had been arrested, there were applications made by prisoners and the depositions of witnesses. Some of the cases seemed insignificant to him, the outcome of middle-class wrath, squabbles that were nothing but boring, but there were others that he could not immediately grasp, there was something elusive, like midges that you could not catch hold of, about these unintelligible writings and there were still others that were obviously of a serious character and would lead to important decisions. He sorted them out according to first impressions and wanted to begin with those he thought the easiest, in order to clear the ground and get rid of what he called the "philistinism", the petty matters, and then start work on the more important cases. He hesitated for a moment.

"Oh, let them wait," he said and decided to start from the opposite end, to begin with the most important.

On one of the papers something had been written in red pencil slanting across the top and underlined: "Official of the Tsarist Prosecutor's Office". Ragozin ordered the warder to bring in the accused and began to read through the paper. There was very little of it: the workers' picket had detained during the night Anatoli Mikhailovich Oznobishin, age 35, assistant to the Soviet notary, university education, whose night pass had expired; the examination had brought to light the fact that he had formerly held the rank of candidate for a legal post and had worked in the office of the Public Prosecutor but, according to material added by the investigator, he had held higher posts, including that of Public Prosecutor, and this had to be established.

In about ten minutes Oznobishin was brought in. He bowed, rubbed his small hands lightly as though he were stroking them, and thanked Ragozin when he told him to sit down. He answered the usual questions briefly and accurately, without keeping Ragozin waiting and, without wandering from the point, maintaining his own dignity but at the same time showing respect for the person of the interrogator.

"And what exactly were you arrested for?" asked Ragozin having exhausted the list of formal questions.

"Because my night pass had expired, it was just one day overdue."

"What happened, did you forget to renew it?"

"No, I remembered. But there were so many little things to do that there was no

time. I thought I should not need it last night and would renew it the next day. That was my fault, of course."

"What do you need a night pass for, in general?"

"I am often kept late at work—very tiresome business. During the day we have many callers and in the evenings the documents have to be got ready. There are several people in our office who have night passes."

"And were you kept late at work last night?"

"No. Last night, no."

"And where were you?"

"Last night—a purely domestic affair. . . ."

"Stayed out late?"

"Yes."

"A woman?"

"Yes, a woman," answered Oznobishin quietly and lowered his eyes.

Ragozin, in his time, had seen people under the most diverse circumstances and had learned to know a man not only by his words but also by the lesser manifestations of his inner life, by what might be termed the chemistry of feeling. When the inner feelings are suddenly compounded into an intricate whole, or break up into their component parts, one excludes and at the same time covers the other, and the false seems more plausible than the true. In Oznobishin he did not notice the slightest sign of pretence and was trying to guess whether his sincerity was real, or whether his candour was dictated by farsightedness.

"And what do you think yourself; surely you don't suppose you are being kept here because your pass was not renewed in time?"

"Of course, that's impossible," Oznobishin shrugged his shoulders as if perplexed and made a slight movement with his hands, a very correct gesture which showed that, firstly, he could not conceive of such injustice on the part of the authorities and, secondly, that he was well acquainted with the law on night passes.

"But then you just told me that you were arrested because your pass was not in order?"

"Yes, when you asked me why I had been taken, that is arrested, I told you that I was arrested because my pass was not in order. But now you are asking me whether I think I am being held in prison because of the pass. I repeat, I do not think so."

"Then you know why you are being detained?"

"No, that is something I do not know. I can only suppose that my past is the cause of a lack of confidence in me."

"What were you?"

"I worked in the Public Prosecutor's Office."

"As what?"

"I was a candidate for the bar."

"Did you wait long?"

"Perhaps in the past I should have said: unfortunately, yes," answered Oznobishin with a scarcely perceptible apologetic smile and an appearance of mild shyness. "Today I say: fortunately, it was a long time. I was a candidate for about seven years, from the time I left the university. To use an expression from the past I had an unsuccessful career."

"Why?"

"I am not a careerist," Oznobishin raised his brows. "And what is more I did not have any connections. I come from a humble family."

"And if you had had connections?"

"It's doubtful that it would have helped me."

"What sort of connections are they if they don't help?" put in Ragozin quickly.

"You're right," agreed Oznobishin, but added immediately as though in a joke. "But in my case nobody would have consented to assist."

"Are you such a failure?"

"Yes, a born failure."

"How so?"

"It is in my nature."

Again he dropped his eyes very slightly:

"I was not trusted in the Prosecutor's Office."

"Not trusted?"

"I was not much like the other officials. That was why they showed no confidence in me."

Ragozin suddenly spoke very pointedly.

"They didn't trust you and yet they made you Public Prosecutor."

Every feature of Oznobishin's face, the whole of his taut body expressed the question that he could not utter through lips that had become frozen under the insult. With an effort he overcame the conflict of emotions and said with a worried air:

"Will you allow me to explain?"

"I don't need your explanations, but I insist that you tell of your past without hiding anything."

"I am not hiding anything," Oznobishin shook his head, still not fully able to cope with his chagrin and then spoke with a bitter but very humble, respectful smile.

"Now I understand that I am suspected of pretending not to be what I really was. That is not true. I never was Public Prosecutor. Right before the Revolution I was appointed Acting Secretary of the Court Chamber but the appointment was never confirmed. Where could the fairy tale that I was Prosecutor have come from? I suppose it was because literally two days before the October Revolution, under the Provisional Government, the Chamber received an order from Petrograd appointing me Assistant Prosecutor. This appointment was from the 23rd and the Revolution, as you know, took place on the 25th. None of the formalities attendant on the appointment were carried out."

"Why did you hide that when you were interrogated?"

"I didn't hide it. I was asked what I had been. I did not, therefore, say anything about what I had not been."

"At any rate you were Prosecutor, if not under the tsar then under Kerensky, that's true, isn't it?"

"No. The Prosecutor part of it is a legend. I cannot even consider myself a former Assistant Prosecutor because I never actually took over the post."

"And Secretary of the Chamber under the tsar?"

"That was a duty I fulfilled but I was never confirmed in the post," said Oznobishin with inspired conviction.

Ragozin laughed.

"That's pretty smart of you."

"Where's the smartness? That can all be proved by documents. The archives of the Chamber are intact. And I can name any number of witnesses."

"And what did you do to please Kerensky so much that he appointed you Public Prosecutor?"

"Assistant Prosecutor," Oznobishin corrected him, "and it was not Kerensky but the Kerensky government. Kerensky, of course, could not have known me. In those days appointments were made wholesale."

"How was that?"

"People were appointed wholesale in all the court circuits."

"What was the object of the appointments? To set up an apparatus consisting of officials devoted to Kerensky?"

"The purpose, as I understand it, was to change the tsarist court officials for younger people who were more free thinking. Those people were appointed who had not been able to make any headway under the tsar, who for some reason or another had not been trusted. I suppose that I, amongst many others, had been noticed: there sits a man who has been a candidate for the bar for many years and who obviously was not very much liked by those responsible for the observance of tsarist justice."

"Does that mean that you had rendered no services to that tsarist justice?"

"Services? More likely the contrary," Oznobishin shrugged his shoulders. "I was more likely to cause dissatisfaction and for that the Revolution actually rewarded me by giving me an appointment. For that appointment I now, for some reason or another, have to suffer."

"Ah! The Revolution rewarded you, eh? Well, well," laughed Ragozin, "So that's how you put it."

"I'm not telling a story, I'm only telling you why no promotion came my way before the Revolution, why I did not have the confidence of my seniors."

"And what exactly was wrong with you?" asked Ragozin, slightly irritated. "You keep on saying mistrust, mistrust. Why was it that they did not trust you? What for?"

"I can only guess at that, I can only assume . . ." began Oznobishin in a kindly, rather ingratiating tone, such as he would use to a close friend. "Most likely it was because I did not approve of the repressions, because I did not display sufficient zeal in political cases. I was not, of course, ever given any important job to do—just little things, preparatory documentation, selection of materials. But I always tried, as far as I was able in my small way, to lighten the hard lot of those whom the tsarist laws persecuted for their convictions. Even revolutionaries, when there were such cases."

"Is that so," Ragozin nodded his head very gently, "perhaps you can give me an example?"

"There is the example of the Ragozin

case, that created quite an uproar in this town," said Oznobishin.

"What was that . . . the Ragozin case?" asked Ragozin after a pause.

"It was a case of a secret printshop that the revolutionary Ragozin kept in his cellar. There were a lot of people mixed up in it. The case lasted a long time but Ragozin himself was never caught. He fled."

"Who was he, that Ragozin?" asked Ragozin, looking Oznobishin straight in the eyes. "Was he a Socialist Revolutionary?"

"Ragozin? No, he was one of the Social Democrats.A worker at the railway depot. There were a lot of intellectuals and young people mixed up in the case."

"And where did you come in . . . did you take part in the prosecution?"

"The case was handled by the office. I had something to do with the documentation, so I knew all about it. I had no particular influence but I had the good fortune to help Pastukhov who was also mixed up in it. Perhaps you have heard of him, he's a well-known playwright?"

"What did he have to do with it . . . was he also working in the underground?"

"No, he was involved indirectly, but he was threatened with exile like many more people in that case. Tsvetukhin, one of the local actors, was also suspected. I was able to help him too. Naturally my sympathies with the unreliables, as they were called in those days, did not please my principal, the Assistant Prosecutor. My colleagues in the office also looked at me askance. That's what I meant when I spoke about my being mistrusted in the Public Prosecutor's Office."

"So that was a big case, was it?" said Ragozin and turned away from Oznobishin.

"The Ragozin case? A very tangled affair: proclamations, secret society, printshop, a whole crowd of accused. In our district it was one of the biggest."

"But that, what's his name—Ragozin—he got away?"

"I can't say. In any case he was not found and the case against him was closed according to the law. Perhaps he got safely away, such cases were quite frequent, the old regime was helpless against experienced revolutionaries."

"Against the experienced ones, of course . . ." muttered Ragozin to himself and then asked Oznobishin casually: "Was he a family man?"

"Ragozin? As far as I remember he wasn't. He had a wife, that I do remember: he got away, but his wife didn't manage to get away in time and she was arrested and died here in this prison during the investigation."

"From what? What did she die from?"

"Well, you know what a prison is! But if my memory doesn't deceive me, she died in childbirth."

Ragozin took up the papers. He stared at them as though he were reading each line intently, his head bent low, with scarcely a movement. Then he lifted his head and asked quickly:

"What about the child? Did the child live?"

"I don't know. It's quite possible, of course."

"I know it's possible, but I'm asking you whether you know or not," said Ragozin roughly.

"I don't know, no, I don't know," answered Oznobishin, pricking up his ears, frowning just a little with his small and seemingly calm eyes.

"It's possible, naturally it's possible," muttered Ragozin, regaining his former tranquillity and speaking without any particular stress, anxious to show that he could not permit any rudeness. "Do you know why I ask? Because it is a well-known fact that there are quite a number of children born in prison."

"Undoubtedly," confirmed Oznobishin, uncertainly.

"We have to see that they are taken care of."

"Children are looked after nowadays, that's true," sighed Oznobishin.

"Nowadays!" said Ragozin, speaking sharply again. "Things are different today. And did anybody think of them before? Some kid was born in prison and that's the end of it. Where does it go? Where did they send them, I ask you?"

"To an orphanage, usually," said Oznobishin.

"To an orphanage? What orphanage?"

"There used to be such orphanages."

"I understand. But what I want to know is, let us suppose that . . . that wife, the one you were talking about, the one that died, let's suppose that her child lived. Where would it go from prison, where would it be sent?"

"That I can't say," said Oznobishin

with a new tone in his voice. "We could try to find out, if the case of Ragozin's wife is of any interest."

"Find out?"

"Yes, there may be something in the Ragozin papers about it."

"Do you think the papers are intact?"

"The archives of the Prosecutor's Office are intact, as I told you before."

"Do you think you could find them?" asked Ragozin in a burst of impatience.

"Most likely I could," answered Oznobishin slowly and thoughtfully, "but scarcely, in my present position, that is, not until I am released. . . ."

Suddenly their eyes met in mutual understanding, and they stopped talking. Ragozin's breathing was plainly audible—making a frequent, hissing noise as he gasped through his moustache, while Oznobishin breathed hoarsely through a slightly open mouth. They remained motionless for several seconds. Then, rustling the papers that lay on the table before him, Ragozin pushed them away from him, and said, stressing each word.

"And so you insist that you rendered services to certain individuals prosecuted by the tsarist court. As a liberal, I suppose? From liberal motives, is that it?"

"Out of sympathy," explained Oznobishin gently.

"Of course. Only nobody has any sympathy for us when we are not in power."

"I beg your pardon, but that was before you were in power," Oznobishin corrected him quietly.

"But you are talking about it now, when we are already in power," objected Ragozin. "Please make out a list of those who can give evidence in favour of your statements concerning your past duties. Have you any questions you wish to ask me?"

"Only one. To whom should I address an application for my release?"

"There's no need for an application. The commission will examine the case and make a decision."

Oznobishin rose and bowed in the same respectful manner as that he had displayed on entering. He had already reached the door when Ragozin frowned and stopped him.

"Just a minute. So you think you could be helpful in investigating that, apparently, interesting case you told me about?"

"Ragozin's?" asked Oznobishin and, like an uncommonly obliging advisor, added in a tender paternal tone: "You will probably not find anybody better than me for the job. I know the archives of the office. Although I shall have to rummage in the archives of the Department of Security and also here in the local prison records—some trace may turn up quite unexpectedly."

"Perhaps even in the orphanages?" insisted Ragozin.

"The orphanages?" Oznobishin did not immediately grasp the words; then realizing what Ragozin was talking about, exclaimed: "Of course, in the former orphanages! You mean the child, I suppose?"

"All right. You may go," said Ragozin impatiently and then, motivated by a strange sort of awkwardness and irritation, asked a question that came unexpected even to himself.

"Do you know my name? Has anybody told you?"

"No. And what is your name, comrade?"

"You may go," reiterated Ragozin, as though he had not been obeyed and was compelled to insist.

He jumped up before the footsteps of Oznobishin and his escort had died away in the corridor. He jumped up and almost ran across the room from corner to corner, once, twice, three times. "Fool, what a fool!" he almost screamed aloud, running to the window and striking his fist on the windowsill. "Why, he'll think that I need him. The devil took me in tow! . . And it had to happen today of all days!"

He banged his fist on the windowsill again, opened the window, seized one of the bars of the window and clutched it tightly.

The prison yard, the bare earth of the exercise ground lay dead before his eyes. Perhaps Ksana had made the last journey of her life across that yard, her heavy steps falling on the hard, unfeeling earth. Ksana! For an instant she stood as one alive before Ragozin, when that tender word, the word that nobody had said to him for so long, the word "wife" had come from the lips of a stranger. He saw her arms—she used to rest her sharp elbows on his rough, rounded knees and held her narrow hands cupped as though she expected him to fill them with something that she would fondly carry away into the future. The future had come but Ksana was no longer there and he had been alone with his thoughts for many years. No,

no, of course he was not alone, he had his comrades, many comrades, he could share his every thought simply and seriously with them. But he always had to hunt for the right words in order to express himself to his comrades whereas Ksana understood a silent turn of his head, a wink of his eye, his gentle purr, his cough and—perhaps this was the most important—the clumsy and at the same time bold smile with which he looked at his wife, when he thought in company with her about the coming child that they awaited with such longing. Ragozin had learned some eight years ago that Ksana had died in childbirth in prison and had managed to grow accustomed to that inconsolable knowledge. When he returned to his native town, he had tried to find out something about the death he had never forgotten, but there were new people everywhere and there was nobody who could tell him anything. Death from childbirth he had always regarded as being fruitless. It was only now that he had suddenly realized that Ksana might have left a child behind, a son, yes, of course, it must have been a son! He had thought that with her death everything had come to an end for all eternity. And now he realized that all this had been a terrible mistake: that she was not altogether dead, that she had left him a part of herself, a part of his life with her, and that that part could not die, no, could not! The son, the son that he had waited for together with his wife as the resurrection of and the successor to the first child that had died when Ragozin had been banished, the son of his one and only Ksana was certainly alive! Confidence in that fact had penetrated into the whole of Ragozin's being and had become reality, as real as the huge prison that grew up before his eyes like a dead mass straight out of the barren earth. From here, from this prison, had come the life of his child, from here, from this prison had come Ragozin's conviction that that life would continue, that it could not be cut short.

"I'll find him," he said firmly and forcefully released his fingers that had grown cold from the iron bar, turned away from the window and saw on the table papers that called him back to work.

In a flash he recalled the whole interrogation and decided that Oznobishin had not been the Prosecutor, because if he had, he would not have remained in the town where he had worked—he was too clever for that, too careful—he would have fled.

Ragozin wrote: "check the statements by calling witnesses" and took up the next case. The work had become an unusual strain on him, he had to force himself not to think of his son—and all the time he thought of him: how he would search for him, what roads he would have to take in order to get on to his tracks, who would be able to help, and how, when his son was at last found, he would take him and would live with him.

Towards the end of the day Ragozin felt so tired that, walking home to refresh himself, he scarcely managed to drag himself there. The goodwife met him in the yard with gasps and expostulations.

"There was a comrade came to see you," she said, "and he was very sorry that you weren't at home."

"What sort of a comrade?"

"A young fellow in a car, and such a car that all the boys in the street came running here."

"What was his name, did you ask him?"

"He left you a note with his address in it. He insisted that I give you his best regards."

Ragozin walked slowly up to his room and picked up the note from the table without any special desire to read it; he glanced at the signature and did not so much read as gulp down the words that had been written with a pencil so sharp that in places it had torn the paper.

"Dear Pyotr Petrovich, I came for you and, what a pity!—you weren't there! But you won't get away from me—I have all Saratov at my disposal! I know what sort of work you've been given and I don't envy you, there's not much pleasure in it. As soon as ever you get some time to spare, come to me in the evening. So far I'm living with my mother: take a tram to the end of the line at Soldatskaya Slobodka, ask for the school, she has an apartment there. I want to see you terribly, what do you look like? Awaiting you impatiently. Kirill."

Ragozin threw the note down onto the table, slapped it with his open hand, lifted his arms and almost touched the ceiling, snapped his tightly twisted fingers and expelled a deep breath.

"Oh, the devil! Kirill! Oh!"

Laughing he strode to the door and called to the goodwife.

"Can you get the samovar going? It

wouldn't be bad. . . . Is there a glassful of vodka left from last time, eh? A glass of vodka wouldn't do me any harm!"

Again he said—Oh, the devil!—and again he laughed.

8

All Dibich's efforts to get on a steamer to take him to Khvalynsk had been in vain. The more failures he experienced the greater the desire aroused in him to get to his home, and he decided that if he could not travel by steamer he would go on a tugboat or would take a job as a bargee—it did not matter how he got there. He had toured all the wharves—everywhere people clustered round them like flies round a honeypot—he had been to all sorts of offices and institutions, and spent nights waiting in queues for passes, permits, orders, had attempted to follow the advice of various well-wishers, and had done the opposite—had gone contrary to all advice, but the result was always the same—that is, there was no result.

In the course of these searchings he reached the Military Commissariat of the town. The first day he came, the Commissar was not seeing visitors, the second day, Dibich had to stand in a queue until evening to get his bread ration, on the third day, he was told that the Commissar had received visitors the day before and that he should come at the proper time, on the fourth day, the Commissar had had to go somewhere in response to an urgent message so that it was only on the fifth day that Dibich got his name on the list to be received by the Commissar. As was the case everywhere, the crowd at the Military Commissariat consisted of people seemingly alike but actually very different. Some of them came from units of the tsarist army that had long before been disbanded and who were seeking help in their personal affairs, others belonged to the newly mobilized Red Army, the third category consisted of those who had been rejected on health grounds, or who were trying to get exemptions from conscription, or had been called to account for having refused to serve—young and middle-aged men who had seen much, separated by events from their homes, from sensible work and their near ones—all tired, often bad-tempered, hoping for anything whatsoever as long as it came soon: either a chance to go home, or enlistment in the army, if only to put an end to that exhausting waiting on well-worn porches and staircases, in corridors and waiting rooms, under faded orders and posters.

Dibich was received in the afternoon, when the Commissar had already been tormented with complaints about pensions that had not been received, demands for help and for money grants, and he sat with his elbows on the table, perspiring from the stuffiness of the room and dizzy from cigarette smoke. A smug, self-satisfied young officer with neatly parted hair and a new breath-taking khaki uniform was reporting to him; Dibich was immediately disgusted with that uniform, because it reminded him of the fops that had hung around headquarters during the war, and because everything about it was exaggerated—a half-tunic, half-blouse of tremendous length that hung down almost to the knees, fancy pockets as big as letter boxes on the breast and at the belt, a shoulder strap as broad as your hand on a fancy sword belt, breeches like big, round wheels, carefully wound puttees on thin calves, like hoopla rings on sticks.

"And it is so uncultured!" the officer concluded with obvious contempt, rubbing the parting in his hair with the edge of his hand.

"You think so?" said the Commissar and tapped on the paper with the dark crescents of his fingernails—one, two—one, two—one, two, three, as though he were humming a tune to himself.

"What do you want, comrade?" he asked Dibich.

"But that's nothing to do with us," he explained in a bored tone when Dibich had told him his business. "You should go to the Central Escaped Prisoners' Board and not to us."

"I've been there twice."

"So what?"

"They sent me to the Evacuation Point, the Evacuation Point sent me to the Social Security Committee, the Social Security Committee to the Town Commandant and the Commandant to you, and at any rate . . ." Dibich was beginning to get explosive.

"Sh-h-h," the young officer stopped him, thrusting the thumb of his left hand into his sword belt and rubbing the other fingers up and down soothingly.

"Where do you get your rations?" asked the Commissar.

"From the Military Department, as a soldier discharged from hospital."

"That's not right, you should get them from the Prisoners' Board."

"I don't care where I get them. I want to get home and nothing else."

"You don't care, but we do."

"Until I am returned home," persisted Dibich stubbornly, "as a former prisoner of war, as a sick man, as a demobilized soldier, as a lunatic if you like, I don't care which, I consider myself dependent on the Army Department. I don't intend to go anywhere from here until I am sent home, to Khvalynsk."

"Now, now, now!" again the fop of an officer restrained Dibich. "Do you know who you're talking to? The Commissar says that you must make your arrangements through the civil authorities, through the Town Soviet, and not the military. D'you understand that?"

"Write him a note to the Town Soviet, and let them sort it out," ordered the commissar in a conciliatory way, and began to tap out his tune again.

With a flicker of his eyebrow, the officer indicated the door to Dibich, clicked his heels and went out first. The boots he was wearing were like flatirons with the straight edge to the front and were polished so that they shone like reddish egg yolk. As he reached his table in the adjoining room, the telephone bell rang. He took up the receiver, listened and then said carelessly.

"Yes, this is Zubinsky at the telephone to take messages . . . I repeat: this is Zubinsky to take messages. Well, if you don't understand what I mean by "take messages", you're not a soldier at all, but just a muddler. . . ."

He put down the receiver, took Dibich's papers, read them and asked:

"Were you a regular officer?"

Just then the telephone bell rang a second time.

"You again?" said Zubinsky and shrugged the smartly fashioned shoulders of his tunic. "There's no need to get excited, my dear fellow. I answered: yes, this is Zubinsky to take messages. . . Oh yes, in the old style it would be adjutant but we live in the new style, not the old! . . So now you understand? Thank God!"

He finished the conversation and glanced at Dibich obviously expecting sympathy.

"It really was simple and convenient," he muttered. "An adjutant is an adjutant, after all. Were you a regular officer?" he repeated glancing at the paper, "No? And when were you made lieutenant? Commanded a company? . . No, a battalion? . . Weren't you recommended for captain?"

"What has all that got to do with what the Commissar ordered?" said Dibich nervously.

Zubinsky did not answer but took out a sheet of paper, dipped a pen in a huge ten-pound inkpot studded with glass knobs, waved the pen over an invisible point on the paper for an unearthly long time, as though he were warming the pen up for some inscription as extraordinary as himself. He did not write anything, however, but stopped twisting the pen and asked.

"Why don't you join the Red Army? You're a specialist, you have war experience, and we need specialists."

"I'm a sick man," Dibich cut him off short.

"You get better more quickly in the army than anywhere. We have good rations, we'll fatten you up."

"I'm not a pig and don't need fattening up," stuttered Dibich, flushing blood-red. "And if people like you are recruited into the Red Army, I don't congratulate it!"

Zubinsky did not even raise his eyes, he merely dipped the pen again and said to the paper:

"Steady, lieutenant, steady!"

"I haven't been a lieutenant for a long time. For your information, I'm no longer a lieutenant. Any more than you're an adjutant," croaked Dibich in a rage.

Zubinsky wrote his note coldly and ornamented it with a signature that was a real acrobatic feat.

"It's a mistake to get excited, comrade. You should value people who are willing to help you. Take this paper to Comrade Izvekov, Secretary of the Town Executive Committee. If you don't get anything settled there come back to me and I'll try to investigate the matter. I'm a man of culture and not at all petty."

"You may be sure that I shall not trouble you again," answered Dibich in an inexplicable fury and walked out without so much as saying good afternoon. Recently he had had fits of extreme irritation that came over him quite unexpectedly. In the prison camp, he had had to re-

strain himself and hide every trace of willfulness, but since then impatience had got the better of common sense. The obstacles, petty as they were, that stood in his way on the long road home were becoming too many! He grew mad at every ridiculous little thing but soon came to himself, like a man who is driven into a fury by mosquitoes and begins to wave his arms like a windmill but soon gives it up as he realizes its uselessness.

He felt better in the street. He was distracted by the change that had taken place while he had been in the Commissariat. When he had entered the building the day had been bright, everything was sharply outlined in the sun, and a heat wave was to be expected. Now the quivering trees in the gardens were bowing their scared heads to a cold wind and the streets were steeped in a greyish light as though a dark cloak had been thrown over them. The black clouds piled up on each other and one felt that somewhere there was already a spring downpour, perhaps with hail.

"All I need now is a shower bath," thought Dibich, increasing his pace and bending his head against the wind.

The wind drove paper, straw, last year's dead leaves and powdered horse dung along the streets; the rubbish, which would have buried the streets if it had not been for the beneficent storms, was whirled into columns and funnels that danced quadrilles in the air. Everything was humming and ringing under pressure of the wind, a groan rolled over the iron roofs, the pulsating telegraph wires whistled, gates and doors creaked and slammed with a continuous rattle of musketry. The people were running for shelter.

He had not very far to go and the high house in a street closely planted with trees and bushes beating about in the wind, was already in sight when the noisy wall of curling, surging, leaden water came slanting down on Dibich as though it were being poured out of a bucket. Making a short, quick dash he dived straight into the wall of water, hurrying to reach the entrance to the building; the rain enveloped him, covered him from head to foot with big round spots which immediately merged into black patches on his shoulders, chest and knees and Dibich felt a biting, life-giving cold all over his body.

He was drenched before he reached the awning over the entrance steps of a building where several other people were already taking shelter. Shaking off the water, he stood watching how the countless heavy raindrops spattered on the earth, how bubbles were formed and burst into stars on the asphalt, how the foam streams from the gutterspouts on either side of the entrance grew thicker and more turbulent, and raced down the slope from the pavement to the asphalt.

Before the entrance to the building a wet driver was fussing around a long "Benz", trying to pull the hood up as quickly as possible but the car was already full of water, streams ran from its black leather seats, down the radiator and mudguards, turning the car into a submissive animal caught in a shower.

At that moment a not very tall, one might even say short, young man came running out of the building: his swarthy face was sprinkled with freckles on the bridge of his nose, he was wearing a white Russian shirt with the collar open and the corners turned back. He waved the cap that he held pressed in his hand and whistled.

"A regular bath!" he said with obvious satisfaction.

He looked knowingly in the direction where the sky was assumed to be, where the downpour of rain was constantly changing—first heavy, then light, then heavy again, and through the chaos of wind-driven water, Dibich thought he saw in that purposeful glance something that was arrogant and vital, as though this little man did not for a moment doubt that he could stop the rain immediately or set it pouring down harder than ever. For a second Dibich got a feeling that somewhere or other he had seen that face with the high cheekbones, straight mouth and equally straight reddish eyebrows. It was no more than a transient recollection, however; Dibich had not sufficient time to recognize the man, although he might be well known to him; the man who had cast such an extraordinary glance at the sky, clapped his cap on his head and calmly, slowly, with apparent deliberation walked out into the rain, towards the car and there helped the driver fix the supports of the awning, took his place beside the driver and set off, almost floated away, like a boat boldly cutting its way through the speckled noisy river that swept across

the road. Two small boys, in ragged trousers and wet shirts that clung to their bodies, appeared from nobody knew where and ran shouting and splashing through the water after the car until they disappeared into the grey rain screen like the merry figures of a shadow theatre.

Dibich went into the building.

In a big room on the second floor that seemed unexpectedly festive, he found half a dozen other visitors and a girl with bobbed hair sitting at a table beside a door with a brass handle, polished as only sailors can. Izvekov was not expected to arrive in less than an hour and the list of visitors already contained ten names: the girl advised Dibich not to waste time, Izvekov would not be able to see everybody. On Dibich's insistence, his name was put on the list and he took his place in the line of those awaiting Izvekov: it was pleasant to feel that his wanderings would come to an end in this office, it was very nice to sit there in a comfortable armchair, there was such warmth in the clean walls, such a silence that lulled the senses, a silence that seemed to be competing with the patter and splash of the rain against the plate-glass windows. He shivered slightly from his cold wet blouse, but settled himself deeper in the chair, and probably dozed off immediately because he suddenly discovered that he was leaning over the bows of a steamer, and on the steamer there was a sunburned youngster who for a long time swung a coiled line and then threw it lightly onto the wharf so that it lengthened into a long snake as it whirled through the air and banged on the iron roof of the wharf office: the captain on the bridge put his mouth to the speaking tube and shouted: Stop! Hard astern! The water under the paddle wheels boiled, seethed and splashed, the steamer shuddered, the passengers ran from the upper to the lower deck, their feet clattering, the captain again shouted: Stop! and Dibich awoke.

He saw that the waiting people had risen to their feet, pushing back their chairs as that same shortish, swarthy young man that he had seen at the entrance, cap in hand, walked rapidly and noisily across the room, flung open the door with the brass handle and disappeared, followed by the short-haired girl who closed the door behind her. Dibich realized that he had been fast asleep. He wanted to ask the visitors walking impatiently up and down the room who was the man that had just come in, when the door opened again, and the girl, studying him very closely, said in a tone he had not heard before.

"Comrade Dibich, if you please!"

He was quite unprepared for this invitation, hesitated, but the girl nodded her head confirmingly and repeated:

"Yes, yes, Comrade Izvekov asks for you!"

He straightened his blouse, arranged the folds under his belt behind—smartness always helped him overcome his fatigue—and stood at the door like a soldier when he entered the office. This was the first time he had seen what he believed to be an important Soviet civil worker—not a soldier—and he did not know exactly how to behave.

"Your name is Dibich? Sit down," Izvekov suggested, and walking round the table, sat himself down without taking his eyes off Dibich.

Again and with absolute certainty Dibich told himself that he had seen that man before, where he could not remember, but he knew he had seen him: involuntarily he let his gaze rest on those tobacco-yellow eyes, on the slight patch of freckles that spread from the bridge of the nose, freckles that were unusual in a swarthy skinned man. For a few seconds they looked at each other in silence, until Izvekov broke it by asking him in a tone that seemed to imply an order:

"Tell me, didn't you command the 2nd Battalion of the 8th Infantry Regiment?"

"Yes, I did. I was a lieutenant of the 8th Reserve Regiment."

"Well, I wouldn't have recognized you if it hadn't been for your uncommon name!" said Izvekov shaking his head either in sympathy or in reproach.

"I, on the contrary, seem to recognize you, but can't remember who you are. Perhaps it was at the front?"

"D'you remember Lomov? Private of the 6th Company of your battalion?"

"Lomov!" Dibich made to rise from his chair. "Lomov the scout!"

"Not exactly a scout! And if he was a scout it was your fault," laughed Izvekov.

Translated by George Hanna

(To be continued)

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BOOKS AND WRITERS

THE YOUTH OF A HERO

(About certain characters in Soviet literature)

The unity and strength shown by the Soviet Union in the war against fascism surpassed all the expectations of foreign observers. Those who could not understand the essential nature of the heroism and courage manifested by the Soviet people looked for explanations of them and of the brilliant victory in "the vast spaces of the country," "the Russian frosts," and in the peculiarities of the "mysterious Russian soul. . ." Today all these idle inventions and "conceptions" appear absurd in the light of the true history of the heroic Soviet people; the pseudo-scientific eloquence accompanying these "explanations" cannot hide their futility.

The concept of the "mysterious Russian soul" was a particular favourite with foreign "interpreters" of the Soviet people's victories. Here, we must begin, first of all, with the remark that this expression in itself is incorrect as it fails to give any definition and has no historical background. The discussion should revolve around national character which, from the standpoint of dialectical materialism, is a historical category bound up inseparably with the general definition of a nation. Stalin wrote that ". . . the psychological make-up, or as it is otherwise called, the 'national character' is something indefinable to the observer, but inasmuch as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is definable and cannot be ignored.

"Needless to say, 'national character' is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life; but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its imprint on the physiognomy of the nation."

We do not seek to deny that the national character lends a specific form to the social processes in any given country, among any given nation. The imprint of past history lives and develops in the actions of contemporaries.

The national character, however, is not something monolithic. It is as contradictory as the historical tradition which has helped to form it. And this tradition itself was forged in the course of class struggles. A progressive social system mobilizes the creative forces of the national character and stamps out its weaknesses, while a reactionary system tends to stimulate the development of its evil sides. Therefore, the ways in which a national character is formed depend entirely upon the predominant features of the social life of the country.

It is quite clear that the "unchanging features" of character cannot be used to explain why the masses of the Russian people, who in the struggle against tsarism had supported the defeatist slogans put forward by the Bolsheviks with regard to the imperialist war, immediately afterwards heroically defended their newly acquired homeland against the interventionists: why the soldier, who in 1917 voted for the cessation of the imperialist war and left the front to its own devices, fought heroically from 1918 to 1921 against the foreign intervention and the counter-revolutionary whiteguards; and again in 1942 stood to the death under the walls of Stalingrad.

It is the author's aim in this article to bring Soviet literature to the aid of history in order to illustrate the development of certain features of the Soviet national character.

Literature does not give an absolutely accurate portrayal of the development of typical characters, whose similarity of psychological make-up we define as "national character". Nevertheless literature typifies the endlessly varied human material, utilizing, side by side with literary types, data about historical figures whose typicality was noted by their contemporaries.

At the dawn of the 20th century a new social class, the proletariat, appeared in Russia. In the course of the revolutionary struggle against the autocracy and against the yoke of the landowners and capitalists, this class gained predominance in political life and brought the intermediary, vacillating groups of the population under its influence.

Classes are not divided from each other by stone walls. According to Marx's well-known theory the ruling ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. To a certain degree this is also true of the national character. The appearance in Russia of a new leader class was bound to introduce new features into the national character.

The bard of this new type of Russian was Maxim Gorky. His early stories, full of romantic rebellion, cast the features of a new social type, the type of a hero-revolutionary: in its distinct mature form, however, this type first appears in the play *The Philistines* (Nil), and in the novel *Mother* (Pavel Vlasov).

The character of the proletarian revolutionary has developed from the blind hatred of the peasants for their oppressors (which could only lead to elemental outbursts) and has been enlightened by a clear un-

derstanding of the historical conditions and the aims of the revolutionary struggle, an understanding of the urgent need for the proletarian revolution, a need born of the entire course of social development. Vlasov differs from the traditional bold peasant-rebel as does the chemist from the alchemist, the inventor of the aeroplane from the dreamer who conceived the fairy tale about the flying carpet.

The romantic heroes of Russian history, the insurgents, the Bolotnikovs, Razins, and Pugachevs were men forcibly uprooted from their peasant world by fate, men who had finished with the habits of an ordinary working life. The unusual life story of each of these men emphasizes the fact that only exceptional conditions could have made a peasant into a historical figure.

Pavel Vlasov's biography is devoid of all romantic features. Vlasov is an ordinary young worker who, like all those around him, has come to adult life along the weary road of toil and need. But the factory differs from the village. In the ordinary, every-day life of the workers, forces were at work, uniting them to fight for their interests. In the course of this methodical, unceasing struggle, the character of the fighter for the cause of the working class was formed.

At the same time, Vlasov is distinguished from his comrades by his intellect, energy and daring. Such characters, while being typical, are by no means ordinary. The vanguard of the proletariat must be distinguished from the masses. It begins as a numerically small but growing body which represents the basic trend of development; and it gives a more profound and precise picture of reality than the more widespread phenomena that are significant only because they are commonplace.

During the years of the Revolution the masses rose to the level of their vanguard and the features of Pavel Vlasov's character became national features. This process was reflected in Soviet literature, a literature born since the October Revolution.

The very types of the characters featured in the novels written in the twenties reflected the social upheaval. In the classic works of Russian literature, in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, for instance, great attention is paid to the peasant, yet the very nature of this character prevented it from holding the central place. The peasant Karatayev lives in a small and limited world and is satisfied with it; he makes no attempt to get out of it, he does not move or grow as the plot of the story develops. And although the images of the common people are idealized, they play the role of a passive background for the actions of the heroes belonging to the narrow educated society of the Russia of Alexander I.

The heroes of the novels written in the twenties, on the contrary, are the workers and peasants (as in real life).

The peasants described by Leo Tolstoy, for instance, are not the same as the peasants portrayed by Sholokhov. These are no longer naively idealized, undeveloped and passive characters, living in no particular historical period. The Revolution opened the road to historical action for the toiling peasantry, raised their role and increased their social activity.

If the heroes of literature of the 19th century were strong in their reflections but often failed when it came to action, the central figures of the Soviet novel of the twenties, on the contrary, are more interesting and vivid in their actions than in words. The historical situation helped to develop in them the ability to take independent decisions and to act more rapidly than to analyze and express the motives of their actions.

The strong features of these men of action, whose souls were greater than their words, are portrayed with particular force and clarity in such works as Alexander Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* and Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*.

Let us begin with the former.

The partisan detachment is headed by the Bolshevik and underground worker Levinson; life had taught Levinson that the masses would only acknowledge as their leader a "just and upright man," who knew no hesitation and made no mistakes. And Levinson does his best to live up to this ideal. He never shows his doubts, even when circumstances force him to wrack his brain for a way out: only to one or two of his most trusted comrades does Levinson ever admit them. But when the best possible solution for the matter in hand is found, Levinson presents it to the entire detachment as the only natural and self-evident one and defends it unwaveringly. At the same time, he willingly retires to the background and leaves the laurels to another who (like Metelitsa at the military council) was the first to understand and formulate what had been suggested to him. Levinson has no wish to be "the force standing behind the detachment," he knows how to be both an authoritative and a well-loved commander. His 19-year-old assistant, Baklanov, with youthful fervour copies his commander in everything, even down to minor superficial details; and Levinson never permits himself to ridicule the boy; he well understands that the methods of leadership, so hard to convey in words, are acquired together with the small unimportant details. Perhaps that is why he chose as his assistant a youth with a still pliant, unformed character, sooner than the older and more experienced partisan, Goncharenko, the detachment's sapper, or Dubov, the commander of a miners' platoon.

These two leaders of the miners are Levinson's chief support in the detachment of which Dubov's platoon is the backbone. His comrades by class, in the Party and in arms, Dubov and Goncharenko are two totally different characters, portrayed by the author with great skill. Dubov is sparing of words, fierce and passionate in battle. Goncharenko is always cool, calm and collected. It was such highly class-conscious proletarians as these who complemented the ranks of professional revolutionaries, the leaders of the masses.

Another image of a Civil War commander met with more frequently in literature is

that of the platoon commander Metelitsa, the wild steppe horseman, daring to the point of audacity, the author of far-reaching plans, who loves risks but lets himself be carried away and is careless in his courage. This type of talented commander, born of the people, has been frequently portrayed in Soviet art (Vsevolod Ivanov's *Armoured Train*, Furmanov's *Chapayev*, the film of the same name, and others).

The Revolution drew millions into the struggle who had not yet arrived at a clear understanding of their own interests, and these masses lent events the aspect of an elemental upheaval. The heroes who came from their midst obeyed class feelings although they were not fully conscious of them. Without them the Revolution could not have been victorious, yet by themselves they could not have achieved victory, having no clear conception of the aims of the movement, the strategy and tactics of the class struggle.

Therefore, the heroes, the leaders, born of the rebellious people, needed leadership themselves, and this leadership was provided by the Bolsheviks—either directly, as in the case of Levinson, the commander of the detachment, or indirectly, as by Furmanov, who guided and restrained Chapayev. The most talented representatives of the masses, which had risen in elemental struggle, submitted to the organizing will of the Bolsheviks (or struck off on a wrong course) in the same way as the rank-and-file. They submitted and obeyed because they felt (although they did not always clearly understand) that the policy of the Bolsheviks was an embodiment of their own common sense.

This important feature is portrayed by Fadeyev in the character of Morozko, the good-natured, brave, but extremely irresponsible and undisciplined partisan. No matter how thoughtless and undeveloped Morozko was, there was one thing he was firmly convinced of—that it was necessary to wage a battle to decide whether the miners, such as he, were to go on living in dirty wretched hovels, working themselves to death for the owners' profits, or whether the owners were to be driven away and the workers and peasants were to build up a new life, without oppressors. How this was to be done, Morozko could not have told, indeed he did not think much about it; but he had seen that the Bolsheviks, Dubov, Goncharenko, Levinson, knew, and he followed them bravely and unflinchingly to the end, giving his life simply and courageously when the need arose.

Morozko followed in the wake of events, sometimes lagging behind or taking a false turning; Dubov, Goncharenko, Levinson, cleverer men with firmer character, were able to understand the grandeur of that which was taking place and marched abreast of events, subjugating their own personal lives to their revolutionary duty. While for Korchagin, the hero of Ostrovsky's book, the question of any such subjugation did not even arise: the Revolution was his personal life. He was carried away by it from early youth, it filled his life entirely, leaving no room for any other personal passions apart from the great passion of the people.

Ostrovsky's book *How the Steel Was Tempered* is the story of the developing consciousness of a young worker who became an eminent master on the cultural front.

Each success of the young Soviet republic is a personal, intimate joy to Korchagin. Each difficulty and obstacle in the road to Socialism becomes Korchagin's personal, mortal enemy. He fights against this obstacle with all the passion of his nature. Korchagin does not save his mental and spiritual strength for any special, extraordinary matters. He cannot take an officious, indifferent attitude towards even the smallest and most modest task. Korchagin carries the poetry of the Revolution in his soul and every task which he undertakes is coloured by its grandeur and demands that he gives himself utterly.

When paralysis puts a stop to Korchagin's active career, a new and wonderful page begins in his life. Having read and thought much in the long, sleepless nights, he is enabled to review his own past life from the point of view of an outside observer, to analyze and portray his own actions. His book is the last feat of a hero of the revolutionary years, who has remained true to himself and, falling, passes his own image, like a torch in flame, from his own weary hands into the strong young hands of the next generation. *How the Steel Was Tempered* marks two stages in literature: the completion of that directly reflecting the Revolution, and the beginning of a new period. Pavka Korchagin, who fought with the high school boy Sukharko, and Pavel Korchagin, the author of his book, are different people, or rather they represent different stages in the growth of a hero. The organic fusion of the revolutionary energy, purposefulness and will power of a proletarian with the mature and broad outlook of an intellectual belongs to the new, post-revolutionary epoch. And if Ostrovsky introduces these features into the psychology of Pavka Korchagin, we must understand that these are the reflections of a man of the thirties about the past. *How the Steel Was Tempered* is not a historical novel about the Civil War, but the story of a young man of the Soviet epoch.

The years passed and the heroes of the Red Guards' attacks, like Pavka Korchagin, accumulated culture and became intellectuals of proletarian birth.

On the other hand, the old intelligentsia gradually ceased to feel itself in the role of a more or less involuntary companion of the workers and peasants, had ceased to philosophize and squabble over politics and disparage people who had torn themselves free from its patronage. Facts are stubborn things and had to be acknowledged.

The majority of the old intellectuals rid themselves of the influence of obsolete ideas and joined actively in the Socialist construction. In the course of this construction, the classes, dividing the old society disappeared, and the customs connected with them remained only as a survival. The intelligentsia merged with the revolutionary

vanguard of the proletariat and became a leading group of Soviet society.

This process is reflected in Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *Without a Pause for Breath*. The schematically sharp division between the new and the old, the positive and the negative heroes disappear in this book. The author no longer deals with the sharp partitioning of the hostile classes of whom one is building Socialism while the other, at best does not interfere; he now deals with the various, more or less important survivals of capitalism in the minds of people united by one common aim.

Guenka Sinitsyn, for instance, is the son of a worker and a member of the Young Communist League. But his character bears the imprint of bourgeois individualism. He is curt and merciless in his dealings with people: he thinks this is Bolshevik purposefulness, that the cause demands it, but in reality he is simply conceited and vainly proud of his own unimpeachability.

He meets with hostility in those around him. The people have learned to distinguish between an opportunist and a true Bolshevik who, like Korchagin, is exacting first of all to himself, and who, under a grim exterior, hides a warm sympathy for people. Hence, a number of Guenka's failures. The masses who elected him to a leading post turned away from him, surrounding him with enmity.

Guenka is convinced that he is underrated and misunderstood, and in this mood he departs for Moscow. But there he finds himself surrounded by people no less gifted and frequently better educated.

Gradually he begins to understand the falsity of his own position. At this difficult moment he finds help in his love for Vera.

Vera is the exact opposite to Guenka. She grew up in a family of the old intelligentsia, who met the Revolution with hostility. But she did not inherit this hostility. The influence of her surroundings, the influence of the epoch, was stronger than the family influence. Vera considers herself, in the first place, a daughter of the Revolution, a daughter of the country building Socialism. The eager fight against Russia's technological backwardness attracts her as the fulfillment of the ancient hopes of Russian patriots. That is why the organic tie with the culture of the past does not separate Vera from her own generation. She reads old books from a new point of view, and feels herself one with the shock workers of the plants, collective farms and construction sites of the first five-year plan. Vera becomes a Communist not as the result of the actual experiences of a member of the oppressed classes, but by conviction, accepting the aims and principles of the revolutionary world outlook. That is the most difficult road.

In the complicated and troubled course of their love for each other, both Guenka and Vera help one another to grow. But Vera gives more than she receives, teaches more than she learns. The image of Vera is one of the first portraying the appearance of active and purposeful characters among the new Soviet intelligentsia, tied by thousands of threads to the people.

Great interest is also attached to another personage in this novel, Lyass. His hair has long turned grey, but youth is not merely measured in years. Spiritual youth, the ability to dare and to create, these are just as important. Lyass found no place for himself in tsarist Russia, he had travelled to the ends of the world, and practically found his second home in America, where he made his name as a scientist and became a distinguished professor. But the news of the Revolution forced him to give up everything and return to his own country, to help overcome privations and build a new life together with his people.

The coincidence of an exceptional individuality combined with the eager enthusiasm for his life's work brings Lyass very near to the young people. The latter are attracted to the grey-haired scholar, feeling him to be in harmony with their own ideals. Lyass, on his part, seeks the support of the Young Communists when indifferent officials delay the introduction of his invention into practice.

In the battle against nature and the forces of the old society, in the remaking of the country, formed through the ages, the characters of the new people are forged. They achieve a sense of their own importance and seek complete, perfect expression in all spheres of activity.

We find an attempt to portray this course of development in Veniamine Kaverin's book *The Two Captains*. In the first volume, the heroes of this novel are boys and girls, pupils of a Moscow school, full of childishly eager plans. In the second volume, we see them as grown-up, serious-minded people, participants in great historical events, but still true to their dreams, still eager to reach the aim which they set themselves in their uncalculating, daring youth that had as yet no understanding of difficulties.

The Two Captains cannot be called a novel about the Arctic, the war, or the like. It is simply a novel that tells the story of human passions, gains and losses, hatred and love. Yet the personal life of the heroes is entirely coloured and permeated by their social interests.

The search for the lost Arctic expedition which engages the attention of Sanya Grigoryev, hero of the novel, to the exclusion of all else, is not simply one of the extravagances of romantic youth but a public matter. The same applies to Pyotr Skovorodnikov's passion for painting, Zhukov's interest in guinea pigs, and so forth. Each one of these boys on growing up shows that his hobby was not simply a fad but a matter necessary and important for the whole country, even in the difficult wartime years. Enthusiasm for their calling, the enthusiasm of public interests pervades the lives of Kaverin's heroes. The person whose strength none attempts to exploit, a personality truly free, thanks to the advanced social system, devotes himself naturally and spontaneously to any given cause, and finds in the *common cause* the expression of his own, individual

life's work. Hence, the healthy mentality and the pure dislike of affectation, of pretentiousness, of empty and high sounding words.

Yet the simplicity of Kaverin's heroes is by no means a sign of triteness, mental immaturity, or vulgarity. The spiritual world of these young men is full and rich; they are acquainted with the full range of sentiments, emotions and imaginings of a highly-developed human individuality.

The Two Captains speak of the maturity of Soviet culture. As the new Soviet society was formed, as its moral and esthetic principles were more clearly defined, the characters embodying these principles in life were also formed.

Problems of the intimate life of his heroes, the intimate relationships, are dealt with in Kaverin's novel. But in these relationships the author finds the same answers as the industrial novels of the thirties discovered in the field of labour, in the matter dealing with Socialist construction. The heroes' personal interests are of a social nature and they understand this, they never think of counterposing their interests and passions for duty. In the hour of the nation's danger, their patriotic duty naturally becomes their overwhelming passion, the supreme need of the individual to the exclusion of all else.

At the same time, the inertia of the novel forces Kaverin to portray the war only insofar as it touches upon the intimate relations of Katya, Sanya, Romashov and Tatarinov with each other. The bounds of a lyrical-intimate novel proved too narrow—in the epoch of a national cataclysm romantic themes, romantic heroes had to give way to the epic in the classic meaning of the word.

Amongst epics of the Patriotic War a leading place is held by Fadeyev's book *The Young Guard*. The author displayed a fine artistic sense in choosing, among the countless heroic episodes of the great war, one in which the leading characters were boys and girls, fresh from the school bench. They enter the war as spontaneously as, under other conditions, they would have taken up any form of active, constructive work. For, before they may choose a profession or fall in love or discover new lands or write poetry, they must conquer the enemy who has invaded their land, trampled the flowers in their gardens, wrecked their plants, institutes and schools. To these young people victory does not only mean the guarantee of their personal happiness, of the freedom to create, but it represents all the inseparable opportunities for a full life.

The subject and the heroes of *The Young Guard* were provided by life itself. The Communists who remained in the city of Krasnodon to guide the partisan struggle were taken by the Germans before they had had time to do anything. And none could have blamed the 16- and 17-year-old boys and girls if, left alone, they had chosen passively to wait for the return of the Soviet Army.

Their decision to take up the struggle without any help showed how profoundly and organically Soviet youth had mastered the ideological and organizational principles of the Soviet system. These schoolboys and girls of yesterday, left to themselves, formed a militant organization with a comprehensive program of resistance. This organization struck telling blows at the enemy, while remaining elusive. A chain of coincidences, against which even the most experienced underground worker cannot be guaranteed, finally works their ruin.

This ruin became their greatest patriotic deed. The amazing staunchness displayed by a hundred boys and girls in bearing inhuman tortures in the Nazi jails, inspired millions of people in the struggle against the German invaders. The feeling of communion with the people gave the heroes double strength in their last, single-handed combat with the enemy, enabled them to bear what an ordinary human being could not have borne. All the dormant forces of the heroic soul are awakened and reach a pitch, impossible under ordinary conditions, and although the outcome of the battle is predetermined and a temporary, short-lived triumph falls to the enemy, the hero, in perishing, feels that he is the victor. His heart beats are part of the great pulse of millions of fraternal hearts, beating in anger and the desire for vengeance, thousands of avengers catch the arms that fall from his hands, and dying he becomes deathless, as the people are deathless.

Fadeyev's task was to reveal the motives that inspired these heroes to the actions which immortalized them. Here the word motives is taken in the broadest sense, that is, not the impulse which stimulates any given action but the entire complex of youthful hopes, dreams of happiness, glory, work begun and left unfinished because the German occupation rose like an iron wall on the road to its fulfillment. A remarkable instance of this is the scene in which Zhora Arutyunyants and Ivan Zemnukhov, trudging to the east with the stream of fugitives, argue about the merits of the profession most calculated to facilitate the creative development of the personality, and Zemnukhov recites his verses, by no means faultless in form but full of an inner force, of spiritual wealth and youthful energy.

Under normal peacetime conditions this energy, flowing through countless, varied channels, would have paved the way for the progress of Soviet culture. In wartime it merged with the powerful current that swept away the dam of the "new order."

In Vera Panova's novel *Fellow-Travellers* we meet Kolka, a village youth, a merry and carefree young soldier. Yet his answer to the question why he volunteered shows a mature consciousness: because the Germans wanted to destroy the achievements of Soviet rule, to enslave the free, Soviet people.

In this connection also, the following dialogue between Danilov, the commissar, and Belov, the doctor in charge of a Red Cross train, is characteristic:

"Our people, you know," said the doctor, "they'll make any sacrifices."

"What do you mean by sacrifices?" asked Danilov. "Sacrifices are made to some one, aren't they? You don't make sacrifices to

yourself. What you call sacrifice, that's the people's natural reaction, yours, mine, that of these girls here. For our people gallant deeds are no sacrifice, but just an every-day thing. For us to go on living as Soviet people, part of us may have to die today. Suppose they kill me, you, Petrov, Ivanov. Is that a sacrifice? But in that case, to whom are we sacrificed—I, you, Petrov, Ivanov? You must excuse me, maybe I don't express myself very clearly. . . ."

"No, I understand you very well," said the doctor, "and I'm inclined to agree with you. But I don't concede you the heroism. Prove that there's no heroism, nothing but some kind of natural reaction. Heroism—you know—that's human splendour, a soaring flight of the human spirit, and it's not everybody that is capable of it, it needs special qualities."

"Qualities can be developed," said Danilov. "And in this war they'll develop in such a fashion that the world will hold its breath."

It is not difficult to reconcile the viewpoints of Danilov and Belov. Unity does not mean uniformity, and the fact that heroism in the Soviet Union is a mass feature does not mean that this feature is developed to an equal degree in each individual. But at a critical moment the people act as one: and this was the united, well-organized force against which German fascism was powerless.

The power of the rebuff which Hitler Germany met with in Russia had been built up in the course of the development of the country during 25 years of Soviet rule. Wise leadership imbued the people with faith in their own strength, helped them to stand firm at a moment of great danger, opened the sluice gates of national heroism. The victory of the Soviet land was ensured not by a blind outburst of elemental indignation but by ideological staunchness and organization.

This staunchness was based on a clear understanding of the nature of Soviet society in which the people are the master of the productive forces of the country and, therefore, vitally interested in its defence.

The development of the hero in Soviet literature demonstrates the growing self-recognition (national consciousness) of the Soviet citizen and the increasing richness of his inner life.

GRIGORI POMERANTSEV

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS

In a series of portraits, Vera Panova's *Fellow-Travellers*, a Stalin Prize winner for 1946, shows how average Soviet people, hurled into the maelstrom of war, mature and develop, revealing all the wealth of their new consciousness and morale. Concrete examples aptly demonstrate the moral and ethical unity of the Soviet people and combine to produce a novel that was warmly received by public and critics alike.

An English translation of Vera Panova's *Fellow-Travellers* was published in *Soviet Literature* (Nos. 6 and 8 for 1946) and the reader will hardly be interested in an outline of a story with which he is already familiar. It would be no easy matter to compile such an outline: should the critic undertake it, he would be obliged either to give a very brief summary of the story, say, in three or four lines—Ivan Danilov is ordered to organize a hospital train; he and the staff he picks make a splendid showing putting all their soul, all their patriotism into their care of the wounded—or to analyze the biography of Danilov and the other characters and their respective paths in life which would mean a review as long as the novel itself.

It is far better to plunge straight into the problems involved, the writer's artistic media and her moral idea.

"Lena kept looking at the teacher and wondering: 'Why is he trying so hard to explain something that is perfectly clear, anyway?'"

In Lena's thoughts Panova gives us an insight into one of the principles underlying her method of writing. Both Panova and her characters try to steer clear of all "explanations" which smack of empty rhetoric. The authoress lets the deeds and behaviour of her characters speak for themselves.

"The whole night the town was on fire and the whole night wounded kept coming in. Some were brought on stretchers, some on lorries, others walked in themselves. Towards morning the professor's strength gave out. 'That's enough. I'm all in. Been at it five days and nights.'

"Faina took him to the staff coach to rest. She told Julia Dmitrievna that she'd take the chance to go to her own compartment and change at the same time, her stomach was rising with the smell of blood, and all her underwear was wet with perspiration. . . .

"'I'm done too,' said the other surgeon, a small black-haired man with a lemon-yellow face, and disappeared; Olga Mikhailovna lay down, right there on the divan in the washroom. 'For a second, just for a second!' she said like a child and fell asleep before the words were out of her mouth. There remained a young surgeon with his fair hair *en brosse*.

"'Well?' he asked, looking at Julia Dmitrievna.

"'Well!' she replied with approval, and went over to his table.

"They worked together in silence. The coach shook and trembled with the bombardment, but they worked with never a thought of whether this night would come to an end, if morning would come soon, if they would be able to rest."

In this manner Panova depicts the gallant

Building a Village Power Station — *N. Terpsikhorov*

exploits of her characters. She leaves it to the reader to appreciate the splendid people he meets in the coaches of the hospital train. As to the characters themselves, their deeds are the natural outcome of their Soviet manner of thought.

This is one principle of the writer's method. Another may be illustrated by the following passage:

"When it was a question of whom to select—a confident, easy-mannered assistant doctor from the town, a lively, vigorous fellow full of high spirits, or a mild, colourless woman with two years' experience in a country district, with a youthful, nervous look about her, not too robust—Danilov unhesitatingly chose the woman.

"And when that plain, hook-nosed Julia Dmitrievna, swarthy as an Indian, offered herself as theatre sister, he did not take fright at her appearance, but rejoiced. At the very first glance he knew that she was just what was wanted."

Here again it is clear that the views held by one of the characters coincide with the writer's own approach to her literary material. When Danilov, the political officer, chooses his people with unerring judgement as to their fitness for the job, he is an executive with the mind of a clever and keen psychologist and the intuition of an artist. He does not go by any given standard. Panova selects her characters in Danilov's manner, like a gifted executive, scorning prejudices and established standards.

That all stereotyped forms are odious is so perfectly evident that one might call it an axiom. In a novel like *Fellow-Travellers*, however, the writer might easily have been tempted to choose as the central figure just that very high-spirited assistant doctor whose services Danilov declined. And the writer might easily size up Julia Dmitrievna, a fright and a spinster, therefore ludicrous, as a mediocrity suitable only for comic relief. But Julia Dmitrievna is a woman seasoned in war, a veteran of the Finnish campaign, and a master of her profession. She is wholly absorbed in her work but not to the detriment of her social interests, so vital in the lives of all Soviet people. Her political consciousness is lucid, her private life complex and rich. "And that," said the doctor, looking after her, "that, I think, is the most valuable thing in the train." At any rate, she is certainly one of the most lovable characters in Vera Panova's novel.

What comes naturally from the writer's aversion for stereotypes is her intense interest in the concreteness of life and her keen observation of it.

However, the authoress is to be commended not only for her "studies from life"; they do not exhaust the whole of the writer's task. For Vera Panova (she once travelled on a hospital train during the war) is by no means a cold observer of the life around her. She shares the thoughts and feelings of her heroes, is carried away by their enthusiasm, and the authenticity of what she writes does not rely merely on the exact narration of detail (the details themselves are revealed to the writer in all their significance because she envisages clearly the great impact of the national effort which she depicts as a whole); *Fellow-Travellers* is a document in art form, a tribute to the inspired patriotism of the Soviet people.

Lucidly and graphically the main idea of the novel—the monolithic unity of the Soviet people—is shown in the portraits of many people who are all so different: laborers, intellectuals, collective farmers, Communist Party members and non-party people.

There are the soldiers and the stretcher bearers. There is Danilov, the political officer, a man with much experience of life and political activity, grown wise on his many jobs. There are Julia Dmitrievna who had found her true calling in nursing, Kramin, a devotee of art (though by profession a lawyer), the old carpenter Bogushev, who had been a railway conductor. His family had consisted of his mother, wife, widowed sister, two daughters and a niece, to whom he referred as "my six women". When the Germans approached the town where the Bogushevs lived, the elderly carpenter got his family to leave the town. On the way the Germans bombed the train. Bogushev helped to pull the dead out from under the wreckage and found his six women among them. He was ill after that, spending one and a half years at a mental hospital. Danilov who had such a wonderful eye for people came across him at the time when he had expressed a wish to return to work and life. Bogushev was taken on to make apparatus for physical training—for exercising the arms and legs. But all the time he had to be doing something—carpentry, touring the coaches with his guitar and singing to the wounded which they enjoyed immensely, tending to the furnace, knitting socks—anything to take his mind off his grief. He had to have something to do, idleness made his hands tremble. Then there are engineer Kravtsov, who had trained all the diesel men in his town, and Vaska, a thirteen-year-old girl from a Nazi-scorched village. She delighted in the novelty of the life around her—the palms in the coaches where the wounded awaited their turn for dressings, the pencilled eyebrows resulting from her visit to the hairdresser's, the syringes and the sterilized swabs. Her whole life was still ahead of her, and so was the education which she determined to acquire at all costs.

Doctor Belov is an intellectual of the old generation, deeply attached to his elderly wife (also a doctor) and to his daughter, both of whom are killed in the bombing in Leningrad—a "man of slight build" and "shrivelled face" who keeps a diary with something touching and old-fashioned about the entries. On the surface of it he appears helpless and naive but in reality he is an honest, noble-spirited person and a highly competent physician.

Whatever differences of profession, tastes, interests, moral qualities, level of consciousness and culture there may exist among the book's characters, all of the people described by the writer are the builders of a homogeneous Socialist society, all impelled by the same aim—to gain victory over the ene-

mies of their country—and all are doing their bit in one great national effort.

There are no unusual personalities in the book. All of its characters may be classed as "ordinary people". Here one is somehow tempted to draw a comparison between these average people, the men and women who fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army, and their counterparts in other lands.

In his *Brave Men* the late Ernie Pyle tells a simple little story of the landing in Normandy which, well known as it is, I will risk repeating. ". . . I heard . . . a remark made by an ack-ack gunner, sitting on a mound of earth about two weeks after D day, reading the *Stars and Stripes* from London. All of a sudden he said: 'Say, where's this Normandy beachhead it talks about here?'

"I looked at him closely and saw that he was serious, so I said: 'Why, you're sitting on it.'"

"And he said, 'Well, I'll be damned, I never knowed that.'"

Jack Belden in his *Still Time to Die* writes that belief in a political aim may lead human courage to heights of heroism in war or which is still greater to a constant, protracted performance, but he says that in the American army that sort of feeling was conspicuous by its absence. And he goes on to say that the G. I.'s did not realize what they were fighting for and that not one man in a hundred had any deep political convictions.

In his *Top Secret*, Ralph Ingersoll claims that "certainly the average G. I. never learned what the war was all about from one end to the other, or really knew why he was fighting in Europe and for what."

It is hard to say how absolutely correct these generalizations are, but that there is considerable truth in them is beyond all doubt. It is not so much the soldiers as their environment which is to blame for this state of affairs.

Average people in the Soviet Union are quite different and the incident on the Normandy beach could never have happened in the Soviet Army. It is incredible that a Soviet soldier in Poland or Czechoslovakia could have been ignorant of what land he was liberating.

It goes without saying that all Soviet people understood perfectly well why the war was waged and why they had to fight. Their political aim was clear to them and their faith in that aim inspired them to great deeds, unflinching performance and lofty heroism. Moreover, Soviet "average people" thought not only of their own land but of other peoples who had to be liberated from the fascist yoke.

The high political consciousness of the Soviet people is deeply rooted in the very foundations of the Soviet system, the most truly democratic system in the world. It is consolidated and nurtured by the vast and multifarious cultural activities of our society and our state. To the Soviet people this consciousness is as natural and habitual as the act of breathing.

What if the passages from the American authors were read to the men and women described in *Fellow-Travellers*? They would not only fill them with surprise but with doubt: how is it possible that a man did not understand such vitally important matters?

That a man inwardly as alien to the society around him as Doctor Suprugov should be among the people in the train is not to be regarded as an attempt on the writer's part to adhere to a certain sense of proportion: say, to have one negative character to a hundred positive ones. In introducing this character the writer had a deeper and more interesting motive. Suprugov is certainly an abnoxious person. His self-love cannot remain a neutral factor and many a time finds expression in odious, selfish actions. However, the authority of the fighting nation grows and becomes such a gigantic force that even Suprugov cannot help but work for the common cause—though the fact that he does his bit is by no means to be put down to his own credit.

Part of the journey we make with one of the characters and events are described in the way in which they impinge on his consciousness; then we sit beside another traveller only to return once more to those with whom we are familiar. The chapter headings tell us how Vera Panova follows the path traversed by each—*Danilov, Lena, Doctor Belov, Julia Dmitrievna*—then confronts us with all our fellow travellers as a group—*From East to West, From West to East, Letters* and *Reminiscences*—and then goes back to *Julia Dmitrievna, Doctor Belov*, and so on.

Digressions, letters and reminiscences are woven into the general pattern to give the complete history of each of the characters. They are drawn in broad perspective, their past, present and future are revealed to us.

In recent Western novels similar patterns are not uncommon. It is only superficial similarity, however, for there is a cardinal difference.

In Western novels of this type each fragment is a separate unit and may be deleted without in the least impairing the whole. In such novels the whole hardly exists and individual destinies cross each other fortuitously, superficially and mechanically. If the writer submissively and passively accepts the unrelated nature and aloofness of drifting characters, if he cannot or will not reveal the real class antagonisms that rend bourgeois society no amount of literary technique will redeem his work. In such cases there is bound to be no novel, no real picture but merely sketches which could be used for a big canvas.

In *Fellow-Travellers*, on the other hand, the pattern of the novel is in harmony with the ideas underlying the work and the characters do not personify separate human traits. They stand out as consummate types of Soviet people shown in the unity of purpose that binds them together.

Vera Panova is not satisfied with merely stating that unity. Together with her characters she poses the question: what new demands does it make of us? What new moral obligations arise out of the gallant performance, the travail of the victorious war?

In the very first pages this can be discerned. And the idea grows, assuming more and

more distinct outlines until in the concluding chapters it becomes the outstanding feature.

Around Berlin the final battles are fought. The war ends, and the men and women who fought in it look back in retrospect on their wartime experiences. They now think of their readjustment to a world of peace, how they must work and live so that their peacetime life may be worthy of their performance in war.

Monuments to the war are not erected on city squares only. The memory of those who gave their lives and of those who returned victorious must live as an inspiration in our work and our private relationships. The ethical values born of the self-abnegating heroism of the war must find their equivalent in the ethical standards of the post-war period. (Panova, of course, is not the only writer in quest of the "transition formula," The same problem is being tackled by many other Soviet writers.)

As the people Panova describes return from war to their homes and families, each is confronted with a definite problem in his private life which he must solve in accordance with the high moral standards I have just mentioned.

Danilov's problem, for example, is that of his relations with his wife. Doctor Belov's great concern is to bridge the gulf between himself and his son, formerly a spoilt and selfish boy but now a changed man come from the battlefields. Their new relations must wipe out the mistakes of the past and find a way of bringing them closer together.

These problems at first glance may seem strictly personal and we may conclude that the writer merely desires us to be more considerate of our wives, sons and daughters after the war. The moral of *Fellow-Travellers*, however, is much deeper and broader than that.

Consideration for one's family only, consideration that does not go beyond the family, would mean placing that family in opposition to all other family groups.

Relations must not merely be more friendly within the family but the family group must develop a strong social sense in regard to the surrounding world. Under the conditions of Soviet democracy, wherein private and social interests are in harmony with each other, the individual identifies himself with the community, with the common cause: the war effort of the Soviet people, the construction effort awaiting "fellow-travellers" on their homecoming.

So-called private relationships—between members of one family, between friends—also bear a social character, expressed in a greater or lesser degree. Dearly though he may love his family, a Soviet man does not regard his home as his "castle", as a nucleus set apart and in hostile opposition to other family groups, as the lair to which that which has been wrested in a fierce struggle with less hardy competitors is brought and devoured away from all others. Such is the position in which bourgeois society places the family. Hence the property sense which penetrates within the bourgeois family itself and finally causes its disintegration (the struggle for property within the family, for the inheritance, various forms of family despotism and oppression).

On the other hand, the Soviet family is open to all friendly manifestations from without. To Soviet people love and friendship are not a haven fencing them off from the rest of the world but they lead to a fuller and nobler communion with their fellow-creatures who also love and seek friendship. Soviet morality is such that the social sense penetrates into the personal and helps to a fulfillment in private life which it would be impossible to achieve in selfish reclusion.

In Vera Panova's novel we witness the transition from the private to the social and the penetration of the social into the private.

There is, however, in the novel a finely-drawn portrait of a young girl Lena who would not allow anything to penetrate her private life, keeping it strictly unto herself.

"Lena was already in her fifth children's home, she was a member of the Youth League, she was studying at a physical training course . . ." "She went without diffidence into a factory or office, and so long as the talk was official, business-like, she was self-confident, clever and resourceful. But if the talk turned upon herself and her personal affairs, she became shy and reserved."

Lena is an efficient worker selflessly given to her task, a highly attractive character. At work she is not merely aware of her obligations to society, she seems to personify the noblest effort for the collective good.

Her private life, however, is something set apart, it is her own affair separated by an impregnable barrier from the outside world—a closed circle: "Only he, she and their love." Lena does not seek friends. She has no desire to exchange confidences, to share joys and sorrows. Then suddenly her personal happiness crumbles. Her husband, who was unworthy of her in the first place, abandons her. If she had had friends they certainly could have helped her to bear her grief. Lena, however, does not confide in anybody. Consequently, hers is not only the anguish of a woman scorned but the misery of a lonely soul—lonely through the fault of her own aloofness. "This cross she would have to bear," Panova writes, "until she found strength to cast it from her." A happier and richer nature is, of course, Julia Dmitrievna who at the end of the book undertakes the care of Vaska, a slip of a country girl.

Socialist morality embraces all sides of our life—everything bearing on our work and what we call our "private affairs."

Fellow-Travellers, though a work of great merit is not without shortcomings. While following the two principal lines along which the writer's concept develops ("not to explain that which is perfectly clear" and "to avoid stereotypes") the reader will find in each some features with which he may rightfully disagree.

There is the part in which Danilov, the political officer, recalls his boyhood and youth. At his father's home "a courteous, considerate attitude to everybody, sparing in words and hard work was the rule." Da-

nilov's father was one of the best reapers in the district. He had a small smithy, he was a carpenter, a locksmith, a saddler, and could make fishing nets. When young Danilov, once on returning home from a meeting, announced to his mother: "Well, I'm in the Youth League now," her only comment was: "And you went as you were, wouldn't have hurt to put on a new shirt."

"They were quite sure," Panova writes of Danilov's parents, "that their own honest life had given their son an example, and that he would never dishonour either himself or them whatever path in life he might choose."

These details and commonplaces are important in that they help reproduce the serene beauty of the hard-working family in which Danilov matured to manhood.

But then follows Danilov's boyhood romance. He falls in love with Faina, the village schoolmistress.

"She raised her arms, unwound the towel, flung her head back and shook it, the heavy wet strands of hair falling over her shoulders and back.

"'Comb it, Vanya,' she said holding out a comb to him."

Obediently he began combing the cool, heavy locks... He could see her face in the mirror, radiant and mischievous... He kisses her. She responds to his kiss but in the same instant laughing angrily breaks loose from him. He flees... She was wonderful, unapproachable.

Faina, however, later takes up with a "man from town." And when the white curtain is drawn over her window and the light is extinguished Danilov hurls an icicle through the window. All was over. Farewell love, farewell Faina, farewell dreams.

These incidents, unfortunately are more reminiscent of literary stereotypes that we have all read before, than of real life.

Why did the writer resort to these artificial and ineffectual incidents which fit in so poorly with the real, throbbing pattern of the whole book?

Danilov is a high-principled, staunch and strong-willed Bolshevik, and an excellent organizer. But how are these qualities expressed in Danilov? Doesn't Danilov's inner life appear somewhat colourless when compared with some of the other characters? Doubtlessly this is what Panova feared—that the unassuming Danilov may appear somewhat one-sided, too engrossed in his work, too clear-cut, not subtle enough.

Panova seems to be saying to the reader: Danilov, this very sensible man who may even seem a little dry has his own cherished romance, his Faina, his Lilith—the beloved of Adam who preceded the terrestrial and prosaic Eve. I do not think that Danilov needs any of these artificial and romantic embellishments. The writer's apprehensions in regard to Danilov's being "too dry" are, moreover, unfounded.

"At one of the stops the train pulled up beside another hospital train. From their windows they could see what was going on in that other train. Two nurses were sewing and laughing as they talked. In the staff coach three men, their tunics off, and in their undershirts, were playing billiards. Between the two trains a repair crew passed hurriedly—a couple of lads still in their teens and two girls in men's overalls—greasy and grimy. 'These youngsters do the heavy repairs,' thought Danilov, 'while these big strong men spend twenty out of thirty days driving balls across the billiard table... And I stand here looking at them as they do it... Surely we can tackle the job these youngsters are doing.'"

It would have done good to elaborate this. Danilov is anxious to take at least part of the load off these youthful shoulders, In this there is far more convincing proof of the fact that he is by no means "one-sided" and "dry" than in the whole tale of his boyish romance. In this, the very prosaic concern of an executive, we find the warm humanity, the nobility of soul which are his.

Now, regarding the second principle underlying Panova's literary method—not to explain what is perfectly clear. A principle that is acceptable but by no means imperative. Another approach would have been quite as justifiable—what is obviously understandable and expressed through the characters does not exclude the subjective reactions of the writer, who by voicing admiration, grief, irony or indignation may intensify the reader's emotional response.

Both Russian and Western literature abound in examples of such an approach. In contemporary Soviet literature we find samples of it in Fadeyev's *Young Guard* and Vassili Grossman's *The People Immortal*. By the way, there are hardly another two novels which though of identical ideological and political direction are so unlike each other as the *Young Guard* and *Fellow-Travellers*, both in regard to artistic media and the method of character portrayal. If anything, the two books are a glaring refutation of the ridiculous and slanderous charge regarding the so-called "standardisation" of Soviet literature.

However, whether we deal with classical literature or contemporary Soviet works what is of greatest moment is this: the reader must at all times sense the author's own attitude to what he writes. This is essential whether the writer's appraisal of reality be forthright and direct, coming from his own person or whether he seemingly (I wish to stress the word "seemingly") stands apart, not interfering, and letting the reader himself fathom his message.

Is the writer's attitude to her characters in *Fellow-Travellers* always as "perfectly clear" as she wishes it to be?

We might discuss from this angle one of the most touching figures in the book—Danilov's wife.

"'Again sugar,' she remarked when Lena handed the parcel to her. 'Why should he do it, deprive himself, when Vanyusha has enough. You tell him we have enough of what we need. I managed to get out of straits. Don't let him worry about us ... he's got his own headaches, I work at home, as you see, making these padded army coats. Well, at first it was the vegetable garden that helped. I used to sell potatoes and buy

milk. Now I've got a worker's ration card which makes things so much easier. Besides I've got relatives in the country. They send me cream from which I churn butter for Vanyusha. . . .'

"She emptied the bag of sugar Lena brought into a bowl. There was no butter at all."

Before the war Danilov worked, went to meetings and travelled while his wife kept house trying to spread his earnings to cover all their expenses. At first he used sometimes to say: "You'll have to study. You don't know anything. . ." But he would be thinking to himself: "And when can she find time for study? Always busy with the housework." And she thought the same. At the same time he was annoyed when the meals were overdone or had a burned smell, when dust accumulated behind the cupboard or a button would be missing from the laundered shirt she handed him.

Though otherwise he may have nothing but admiration for Danilov, the reader can't help reproaching him for his treatment of his wife. Most certainly he underrates her. It is as though he is oblivious to the noble and heroic in her. And here it is not altogether clear to the reader whether the writer condemns this attitude or justifies Danilov and finds excuses for him. Is he such an outstanding personality that we are not to call him to account? Or perhaps his wife is simply the self-sacrificing, submissive type, ready to bear anything for the sake of her love? Will Danilov improve these unjust relations?

It seems to me that according to the ideas embodied in the book Danilov cannot help but reproach himself; the author too, should regard his attitude in that light. However, the piece dealing with Danilov's homecoming has given rise to a good deal of discussion among the Soviet public which only goes to prove what high moral and artistic demands the Soviet reader makes of the writer. As they take stock of every detail, every bit of emotional evidence, readers find that the writer's own attitude remains unexpressed. Hence the writer has failed to give an answer to a vital moral question.

And what has led to the confusion is obviously Panova's dread to impose "explanations".

Neither the critic nor the reader demand didacticism from the writer. There is no need for the writer to assume the solemn pose of the preacher and judge and read sermons or sit in judgement upon his characters. In her portrait of Danilov, the authoress without in the least digressing from the principle of her method and without resorting to long-winded elucidations might have solved her problem. She could have done it in many ways without direct imposition of her thoughts, by shades of intonation, by the very method of representation.

Though not all the ideas of the novel nor all the artistic lines along which it develops have been consummated and answers have not been given to all the questions posed in its pages, *Fellow-Travellers* is, nonetheless, a talented piece of writing which deals with the recent war, the men and women who won the victory and the new ethical values born out of the moral and political unity of the Soviet people and as such has earned wide popularity among the Soviet reading public.

VLADIMIR ALEXANDROV

NEW BOOKS

NEW BOOKS ABOUT GORKY

Professor S. D. Balukhaty, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. *Gorky Seminar. Leningrad State University Publishing House.* 186 pages.

N. K. Piksanov. *Gorky and National Literatures. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 322 pages.

Vsevolod Ivanov. *Meetings With Maxim Gorky. Young Guard* Publishing House. Moscow. 148 pages.

Gorky Theatre Library. I. *Egor Bulychev and Others.* 92 pages. 2. *Dostigayev and Others.* 94 pages. 3. *Somov and Others.* 96 pages. 4. *The Old Man.* 92 pages. Papers and Researches. *Russian Theatrical Society Publishing House.* Moscow.

The latest publications on the life and work of Maxim Gorky include a guide book, entitled *Gorky Seminar* by S. D. Balukhaty; a research paper on *Gorky and National Literatures* by N. K. Piksanov; Vsevolod Ivanov's memoirs *Meetings With Maxim Gorky*; and four volumes of the Gorky Theatre Library in a popular edition.

Sergei Balukhaty's work, *Gorky Seminar*, is the result of nearly 20 years' research by a literary critic who died recently. The book was planned as a college manual of modern Russian literature, but developed into a treatise of greater scope and importance than the author himself had anticipated.

The introductory and closing chapters of the book review the literary sources used and the problems confronting anyone who undertakes a scientific analysis of Gorky's works. The two most valuable sections of the book are "A Canvas of Gorky's Life and Work" and "Themes for Independent Research." The former is a chronological list of biographical facts supplemented by quotations from his works and from criticisms of them. The second part consists of 52 divisions each of which is a synopsis of a theme for the study of Gorky's life and work. This part of the book is supplemented by a review of bibliographical sources and a list of the editions of Gorky's works. The author deals separately with the question of the principles to be followed in textological work on Gorky and methods of establishing his authorship of articles written under a pseudonym and of unfinished articles. Balukhaty also devotes considerable attention to

an appraisal of critical articles and memoirs on Gorky.

Nikolai Piksanov, author of *Gorky and National Literatures*, traces over a period of 40 years the history of "the development of Gorky's own activities in this field and the growth of the national literatures of the country." Piksanov points out that in "the Soviet Union there are more than 50 organized national literatures, i. e., those which have their own press, publishing houses, nucleus of authors and literary organizations. Of these at least 15 yield a varied and extensive output."

Long before the Revolution, Gorky displayed an active interest in the works of writers of the various nationalities then inhabiting Russia. In those early days he advertised the publication of a series of collected works by writers of different nationalities, translated into Russian. The first three anthologies in this series—Armenian, Latvian and Finnish—appeared in the first decade of this century. "In the old, pre-Soviet Russian literature Gorky saw a narrow and limited observation and artistic portrayal of life within the boundaries of central Russia and the complete ignoring of the life in the outskirts, the life of the fraternal nationalities inhabiting the country."

The tasks which Gorky set the new Russian literature demanded a different approach to the culture of the past. Matters were further complicated by the fact that ". . . the national cultures of the country, in the early years of Socialist construction, were all on different stages of development—from nomad traditions to literatures which had reached the highest levels of world culture."

Gorky himself organized the extensive work that was begun in the Soviet Union on the translation of the literatures of the Soviet East into Russian, and the translation of Russian and Western European literatures into the languages of the various peoples of the U.S.S.R. This was bound to exercise a profound influence upon contemporary literature. "The artistic treasures of the past centuries discovered in Soviet times, acquired a new power over the creative imagination of our contemporary writers," says Piksanov. "Historians of culture and literature, in interpreting the historical scheme, had to free scientific thought from the yoke of the traditional cult of the West, of Europe, which underestimated and even denied the right of the Oriental cultures (such as those of Central Asia and the Caucasus), to participate on an equal footing with Western culture in the creation of world culture."

Gorky played a great role in establishing personal relations between writers of different nationalities. This aim was pursued by numerous literary meetings, jubilees organized in honour of the great writers of different nationalities, and visits by groups of writers to other republics of the Soviet Union. Following Gorky's advice, the literary men of the various Soviet peoples actively popularized world literature in their own tongues. As an example we may cite Shakespeare's works; in the past quarter of a century, Shakespeare formerly unknown in the East has been translated into almost all languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union and published in numerous editions; his plays are regularly staged by the national theatres.

No less important was Gorky's work in collecting and classifying the folklore of the different nationalities. Piksanov writes here: "Gorky also indicated to the national literatures the paths for their own development . . . through their native folklore and national classics. . . Enrichment of literary language by using the popular, colloquial speech of the people is imperative for the growth of poetry." To Gorky belongs the credit for organizing the translation into Russian of the oral poetry of many peoples which was previously unknown to Europeans. On his initiative also, work has begun on the translation of the works of the great poets of the Orient: Nizami, Rust'hveli, Bidil, Nava'i, and others; only excerpts from many of these authors had previously appeared in European languages; this work is still continuing.

Gorky wrote: "It would be ideal if every work of every nationality constituting the Union were translated into the languages of all the peoples of the Union. We should then all the sooner learn to understand each other's national-cultural properties and specific traits, and this understanding, naturally, would greatly hasten the process of the creation of that united culture which, without eliminating the individual features of all tribes, would form the united, majestic, formidable, and world-renovating Socialist culture." Piksanov emphasizes that "Gorky thought, and taught us accordingly, that Soviet literature is not a combination of the literatures of the different nationalities, beginning with the Russian. Soviet literature is multinational and multitongued, but united." The ten years that have passed since Gorky's death have confirmed this idea so that Piksanov is able to write that "by delving deeply into the ways of life of one or another of our peoples our writers were enabled to produce great works, recreating national history and contemporary times; i. e., to achieve what Gorky dreamed of and what he demanded from Soviet literature."

However, the import of this process is not merely confined to the possibility of the appearance of concrete, literary works. Piksanov points out that in these years "the conviction grew among writers that it was necessary to enrich and render more complex esthetics and poetics which had previously been moulded upon the traditional models of Western literature . . . the methods and elements of artistic mastery were freshened up and enriched; Russian literature itself, the ripest and richest in artistic technique, felt the influence of the poetics of the literature of the Soviet East."

Vsevolod Ivanov's book *Meetings With Maxim Gorky* is a collection of his reminiscences about the great writer, written at various times. The first essay, *In Childhood*, conveys an understanding of the influence Gorky's works had on the new Russian intellectuals — the contemporaries of the century. In this essay, Vsevolod Ivanov recounts how he could not buy Gorky's books as a child and how his playmates urged

him to steal them from the counter. He spent nights reading these books: "I cannot even say that we liked these stories so much or that we understood them. But they filled our hearts with a great and inexplicable yearning, with that ecstatic, burning, young and golden passion which it is hard to define. And then it was clear that the writer was an upright man, who demanded the truth and sought to eliminate all the grievous, dismal and sorrowful human suffering."

The author's acquaintance with Gorky began after the former's first literary success. He sent "about ten stories" to Gorky. Vsevolod Ivanov wrote about himself at that time: "I walked amidst the general delight, sober, but at the same time most intoxicated of all, and velvet trousers flapped about my legs in broad folds, like fame!"

However, Gorky's reply was unexpected: ". . . he wrote that the stories were poor, that I must work and study. The letter sobered me. I understood that my goal was not the phosphorescent gleam of fame, but hard work and art, and, that the road to art was long, steep, painful, yet sweet. I began to study."

The next essays are dedicated to the author's meetings with Gorky during the twenty years of their acquaintance and friendship. In these essays, Gorky appears as the loving but demanding, tender yet stern mentor of the young Soviet literature, who paid daily attention to the development of each of its writers. The book ends with an essay devoted to the Maxim Gorky Museum, and the following interesting figures are cited here: between 1897 and 1917, 131 books by Gorky were published in Russia in editions totalling 1,083,000 copies, only eight of these books being published in the languages of the non-Russian nationalities in editions totalling 11,000 copies. Between 1917 and 1946, 1,083 books by Gorky were published in the Soviet Union in the Russian language in editions totalling 42 million copies, in addition to which 501 books in editions totalling 5,300,000 copies were published in the languages of the other nationalities of the U.S.S.R.

The four volumes of *Papers and Researches*, comprising the "Gorky Theatre Library", are intended to aid producers and actors working on stage productions of Gorky's plays. The publication is intended to popularize Gorky's dramaturgy and supply the necessary information to theatrical workers.

The volume devoted to the play *Egor Bulychev and Others* contains Gorky's remarks made after the first performance of this play on the stage of the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow. These are followed by an article by the late actor Boris Shchukin, the best impersonator of the role of Egor Bulychev, on his work in creating this stage image. An article by Yu. Yusovsky comments on the ideological meaning of the play and on the nature of the characters of its heroes. In conclusion the book contains the additions made to the author's text.

Gorky was most favourably inclined to these additions as made by the Vakhtangov Theatre. In his *Remarks* he wrote: "I want to repeat that I am pleasantly surprised by all that the theatre has added (of itself) to this play. I think that this form of collaboration between the theatre and the author is highly valuable, both in itself and, particularly, in our days. At the present time, the experienced theatre must help the inexperienced young writer, and if you have succeeded in helping in this connection an old (experienced) writer, then all the more you must continue this method and apply it to young authors. The theatre has all the possibilities for this."

This remark is indicative of the nature of the creative relations existing between the author and the theatre in the Soviet Union, which are based on mutual respect and collaboration.

Shchukin's article raises the question of the actor's tasks and possibilities in creating an image. He writes: "there are various kinds of temperament. For instance, Bulychev's and mine.

"Thanks to various conditions, by my upbringing, I would never allow myself to shout at people like Bulychev did. I may lose my temper owing to nerves, and he—from pure, robust health, if your personality does not please him. This is a temperament of health and vigor. The quality of such a temperament is quite different. And so, I have to place myself in different conditions of upbringing, in the conditions of Bulychev. Here the actor is confronted by a complicated task—the temperament of the given image is added to his own. I act somewhat theatrically. The actor is carried away by his role. He would not be carried away by home troubles. If you have a toothache, you do not want anyone to see you, but on the stage it is different. You act certain characters, you rise to the heights of others. This gives you creative imagination, gives you a different temperament, a stage temperament which is unlike your real one. The scenic form is different, and the temperament is different."

. . . The new books on Gorky's life and work, intended for a varied circle of readers and pursuing different aims, are all devoted, however, to the one great problem of sorting Gorky's legacy, so important for the development of all types and genres of contemporary Soviet literature.

A STAR HAS RISEN OVER THE MARSHES

Wanda Wasilewska. *Song Over the Waters. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 546 pages.

Wanda Wasilewska's book travelled a tortuous road before it appeared in print. The first part, *Flame Over the Marshes*, which Wasilewska wrote in pre-war Poland, was first published in the Soviet Union in 1940. The second part, *Stars in the Lake*, was completed two days prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. On leaving Lvov, where she had lived since 1939, Wasilewska was not able to take the manuscript with her. One of her friends placed it in a gas mask box and buried it under the cellar of the house. When Lvov was liberated from the Germans, the manuscript was dug up, and now, after four years underground, it has been publish-

ed together with the first part; the translation from the Polish is by E. Gonzago and E. Usievich.

Song Over the Waters is a realistic story of the tragic fate of the Ukrainian peasantry in the Western Ukraine which, prior to 1939, formed a part of Poland. On the basis of rich factual material, Wasilewska has recreated the life in a remote Ukrainian village, lost amidst the marshes and thickets of Polesie. Hunger and hopeless poverty, disease and the tyranny of the Polish landlords and police—such was the fate of the Ukrainian poor peasants struggling from dawn till dark over their tiny plots of barren marshland soil which could not yield enough to feed a family. By fair means and foul, the Polish officials and landlords appropriated the best land. The peasants were deprived of the right of fishing in the lakes or shooting game in the woods. The Polish government apportioned the best lands to the retired officers and soldiers who were sent to settle on the Ukrainian lands in order to support the Polish government against the dissatisfied Ukrainians.

The second part of the novel begins with the events of the war of 1939. The rotten regime of pre-war Poland, upheld by terror, crashed. The Polish rulers fled. The army, abandoned by its leaders, capitulated. The German troops marched through devastated, burning and blood-drenched Poland and Western Ukraine. In terror, the Ukrainians awaited the coming of the Germans, at the same time looking to the East, to the Soviet Union whence their only help could come. And the Red Army came to their aid.

The peasantry joyfully welcomed the Red Army and the declaration of Soviet rule by the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine. The lands of the landlords and Polish soldier-settlers were given to the peasants. The fish in the lake and the game in the forest, all became the property of the former poor peasants. Survivals of the past were still strong in the consciousness of the peasantry, they were still ignorant and backward. Certain mistakes were made by the Soviet officials sent to the villages and who could not at once grasp the complicated situation and the psychology of the peasants. But steadily the people's initiative grew stronger. Shoots of the new life began to grow, schools and nurseries were opened, the peasants busily and freely discussed their affairs, the future of their village.

Wasilewska shows the fulfillment of the Olshiny peasants' dreams of a new life, the dreams of the poor peasant Pyotr Ivanchuk who gave all his life to the cause of the liberation of the people.

ALMANAC OF THE PEOPLES

The Friendship of the Peoples. No. 13. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 223 pages.

The almanac, *The Friendship of the Peoples*, number 13 of which has just appeared, is a publication containing Russian translations of the writings of the different nationalities of the U.S.S.R.

The volume opens with a section on *Modern Literature*.

Hutzul is a short story by the Ukrainian writer Semen Sklyarenko, dealing with the Carpathian Ukrainian partisans' struggle against the Germans. With delicate lyricism Sklyarenko describes the mountain scenery of the Carpathians and the Hutzul customs.

The poetic legend of the love of a Kirghizian youth, captured by an enemy tribe, for the daughter of the headman, forms the basis of the Kirghizian poet Aaly Tokombayev's story about the past of his people.

In the short story *The Roots of the Oak* the late Lithuanian writer Petras Cvirka creates the unforgettable image of the old Lithuanian peasant, Urnas, who, before death, recalls his past life in tsarist Lithuania and later under the bourgeoisie and landlords. Strong as the roots of the oak, this old man, the personification of the Lithuanian people, has known nothing but dire need and beatings from the count to whom he belonged. Only before death did Urnas see the "tender shoots" of the new life sprouting on the long-suffering Lithuanian soil.

Other prose works contained in this section include stories by the young Estonian writer Ilmar Sikemjae (*An Ordinary Man*); the Abkhazian writer Georgi Gulia (*By the Mountain River*); the Latvian writer Andres Upits (*Harvest Time, Bread*); and a classic of Estonian literature (*Dr. Tosmas*) by Eduard Vilde, founder of critical realism in Estonian prose, who died in 1933.

The poetry of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. is represented in the almanac by translations of the poems of the Georgian poet Grigol Abashidze, the Dungan poet Yassyr Shivaza, the young Armenian poet Gevork Emin, who won fame by his verses written during the Patriotic War; the young Uzbek poetess Zulfia Israfilova; and the verses of the Tuva writer, poet and playwright Sergei Pyurbyu.

Amongst the poetry, included in the almanac a particular note of freshness is struck by Yassyr Shivaza's verses, remarkable for their poetical conception of the world and colourful images; this poet, representative of the little Dungan people inhabiting Soviet Kirghizia, has published several volumes of verse in his native tongue and in Russian translations since the establishment of Soviet rule.

Sergei Pyurbyu, the Tuva poet, is undoubtedly possessed of great poetical talent; our attention is held by the profound philosophical content of his poems *About Life* and *About Death*, and by the vivid, colourful descriptions of nature in the poem *Yumangun-Taiga*.

The section of the almanac headed *Classics* contains Russian translations of several lyrics by the Uzbek classic poet Alisher Nava'i, excerpts from the Turkmenian version of the well-known poetical legend *Leila and Mejnun* by one of the greatest Turkmenian poets of the 18th century, Gharib Indalib, the verses by the Belorussian poet of the past century Frantishek Bogushevich, and the Lithuanian revolutionary poet Julius Janonis.

In the *Folklore* section the almanac publishes several Buryat-Mongolian historical songs, and excerpts from the folklore of Yakutia.

The section of criticism contains articles by I. Sats on the work of the Azerbaijan writer Mir Djalal; R. Fatuev on the poetry of the Daghestan poet Gamzat Tsadass; G. Puzis on the Lithuanian popular poet Julius Janonis; and notes on *Armenian Periodicals of the Past Century*.

REPORTAGE FROM THE GALLOWS

Julius Fučik. *Last Words Before Execution*. Translated from the Czech by Ju. Axel and T. Cheshikhina. *Foreign Literature Publishing House*. Moscow. 151 pages.

Five years have passed since the days with a description of which Fučik's book begins; not quite four years have passed since the author was executed in Berlin. Today, when voices in Western countries are clamouring for the past to be forgotten, Fučik's appeal to those who live to see the rout of fascism rings timely and true: "There is one thing I beg of you, who will survive these times, do not forget!"

Julius Fučik died at the age of forty. The son of a worker, he grew up in an industrial suburb; from his early childhood he loved music, literature and sport. He won literary fame by his clever, delicate essays on various art subjects. He began a novel but the fascists did not let him finish it. The chief feature in his biography was the revolutionary work to which he devoted his talent and his passion from early youth, and for which he later gave his life.

When the Hitlerites captured Czechoslovakia, Fučik hid in a village. There he wrote a clever book about Božena Nemcova, a Czech woman writer who 100 years ago had fought for women's rights. Before attacking the Soviet Union, the Hitlerites succeeded in discovering and capturing the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Upon that Julius Fučik became the editor of the Czech newspaper *Rude Pravo*, the central organ of the Czech Communists. On the eve of May 1st 1942, Fučik fell into the hands of the Gestapo. This marks the beginning of the events described in his book.

Fučik wrote the following about the Gestapo department for combating the Communists, in which he was imprisoned: "In 1942, the 'Four Hundred' was no longer called anything else but the 'Communist CC.' It underwent many changes, thousands and thousands of comrades, men and women, sat on its benches in their turn. But one thing did not change in it: the spirit of the collective, believing in victory. The 'Four Hundred' was a front-line trench, surrounded by the enemy on all sides, kept under incessant fire, but never for a moment thinking of surrender. Above it the red flag waved. Here the solidarity of the entire people, fighting for their liberation, manifested itself."

This torture chamber was staffed with picked executioners with the habits of cannibals and the customs of all sadists and monsters known to humanity. Refined methods of humiliating human dignity, physical and moral tortures were elaborated in this inferno in accordance with the most up-to-date achievements of technology. All who came here knew that the torment could only end in death, that "time was greedily devouring the last bits of my life." But in spite of that, Fučik's *Last Words Before Execution*, written in scraps between tortures, on the threshold of death, [1] is dedicated to active, creative, selfless and inexhaustible love of life. Fučik ends his bequest with the words: ". . . We lived for joy, for joy we went into battle, and for it we are dying. Therefore, never let grief be associated with our names. . . ."

These notes, written on the eve of death by one of the thousands of selfless fighters for human happiness have aroused the fervent admiration of readers in the country in which the entire people have been carrying the century-old dream of Communism into effect for nearly thirty years. The Soviet reader well understands the feeling of happiness in struggle and victory even on the threshold of death, the knowledge of a duty well done without a shade of vanity for the deed. Fučik leads the reader through a gallery of those "... who lived faithfully for the future and fell for it; these are figures carved in stone." Each one of these figures arouses in his contemporaries a profound admiration for that passionate, inspired, selfless and active life to which these heroes gave themselves utterly.

DICKENS IN RUSSIA

Charles Dickens. *Index of Most Important Literature in Russian Language (1838-1945)*. Compiled by Y. Friedlander. Editing and introduction by Professor M. Alexeyev. Published by Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library. Leningrad. 127 pages.

An index of the Russian translations of Dickens' main works and of the most important literature on Dickens published in the Russian language has been issued by the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library in Leningrad. This index is part of a more comprehensive work on Dickens that is at present being compiled by the library. Special sections of the index are dedicated to Dickens' works adapted for the theatre and cinema and Dickens in Russian belle-lettres. The introduction by Professor M. P. Alexeyev, well-known expert on Anglo-Russian relations, cites a number of interesting quotations and facts from the history of Dickens' works in Russia.

Dostoyevsky wrote about the "world-wide responsiveness" of the Russians. "This Russian attitude to world literature is a phenomenon that has not been repeated to such a degree in other nations at any time in history." As the most striking illustration of this, Dostoyevsky referred to Dickens: "I am convinced that we understand Dickens in Russian almost as well as the English, his every shade of meaning, perhaps, and maybe we love him no less than do his countrymen." Indeed, the history of Dickens' works in

[1] Fučik wrote his *Last Words Before Execution* secretly, in the Gestapo. Paper and pencil were provided by the guard. The latter also smuggled out the pages of the manuscript and hid them in various places. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Fučik's wife found and published them.

Russia is vivid proof of Dostoyevsky's statement.

In 1838, the magazine *Syn Otechestva* (Son of the Fatherland) carried an abbreviated translation of the *Pickwick Papers*. This, apparently, was the first appearance of Dickens in Russian and it opened the sluice gates for a flood of translations, following in rapid succession, which soon made Dickens one of the most popular writers with Russian readers. Only six years later (in 1844) the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* wrote: "the name of Dickens is more or less known to every educated man and woman in Russia." As each new novel by Dickens appeared in Britain it was translated in Russia, some of them (*Dombey and Son*, for instance), being printed simultaneously in several Russian magazines. Herzen wrote in 1851 that "periodicals had made it possible for readers in Omsk or Tomsk regions to read Dickens' novels . . . two months after their appearance in London."

Dickens' popularity in Russia was in no way diminished by the specific British traits of his works. Dickens, the humanist and democrat, could not but be near to the Russian classic literature of the 19th century and the Russian reader. Chernyshevsky, an ardent admirer of Dickens, described the latter in his diary as "the defender of the lower classes against the upper, the castigator of lies and hypocrisy," and Khomyakov, in 1845, even characterized Dickens as "the young brother of our Gogol"; and this comparison of the British novelist with his Russian contemporary gives us a true definition of the spirit in which Dickens' works were accepted in Russia during the first period of our acquaintance with them.

A long chain of statements by eminent Russian writers about Dickens, running through the 19th and 20th centuries, bear witness to the continuing Russian admiration for the great British author. Goncharov wrote much about Dickens, Korolenko devoted a special essay to *My First Acquaintance With Dickens*. Alexander Blok saw in Dickens' works what had remained unnoticed by the majority of readers and critics in the 19th century: "The cosy novels of Dickens are really dangerous explosive material: in reading Dickens I have sometimes experienced a greater horror than that inspired by Edgar Poe." Gorky in his novel *In the World* wrote about Dickens that "this man has achieved to a wonderful degree the most difficult art of love of mankind." Gorky recalled how he "read one and the same book by Dickens two or three times with the greatest pleasure."

Dickens' popularity in Russia increased still more after the October Revolution. The much perfected skill in translating made it possible to present Dickens in practically original form to the readers. Editions of Dickens' works published in Soviet Russia run into impressive figures: "between 1917 and 1936, 70 different editions of Dickens' books were published, totalling 1,119,500 copies. In the Russian language 56 editions were published, totalling 1,038,000 copies, in other languages of the U.S.S.R.—11 editions, totalling 64,000 copies. Besides this, Dickens' works were also published here in the English language, in editions totalling 17,500 copies." By 1941 "the total editions of Dickens' works published in the U.S.S.R. exceeded two million copies; they were issued in 13 languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R."

ARTS

PALEKH ART

Of the arts and crafts flourishing in the U.S.S.R. the delicate art of the lacquered miniature enjoys a fame that is quite its own.

Though within the last three decades the lacquered works of the craftsmen of Mstera, Kholuyi, Fedoskino, and Lokutino have risen greatly in popular esteem, supreme mastery in the art of the lacquered miniature, still, undoubtedly, belongs to the celebrated artists of the village of Palekh. And the history of Palekh art—its development from the declining craft of the icon painters into a vital and altogether contemporary art saturated with all that is best in old Russian painting—is a striking example of the emancipation and blossoming of folk art under Socialism.

"Who would have thought," wrote Maxim Gorky, "that from icon painting, the most conservative of crafts . . . the artisans of Palekh and Mstera would today produce this excellent, admirable art. . . ."

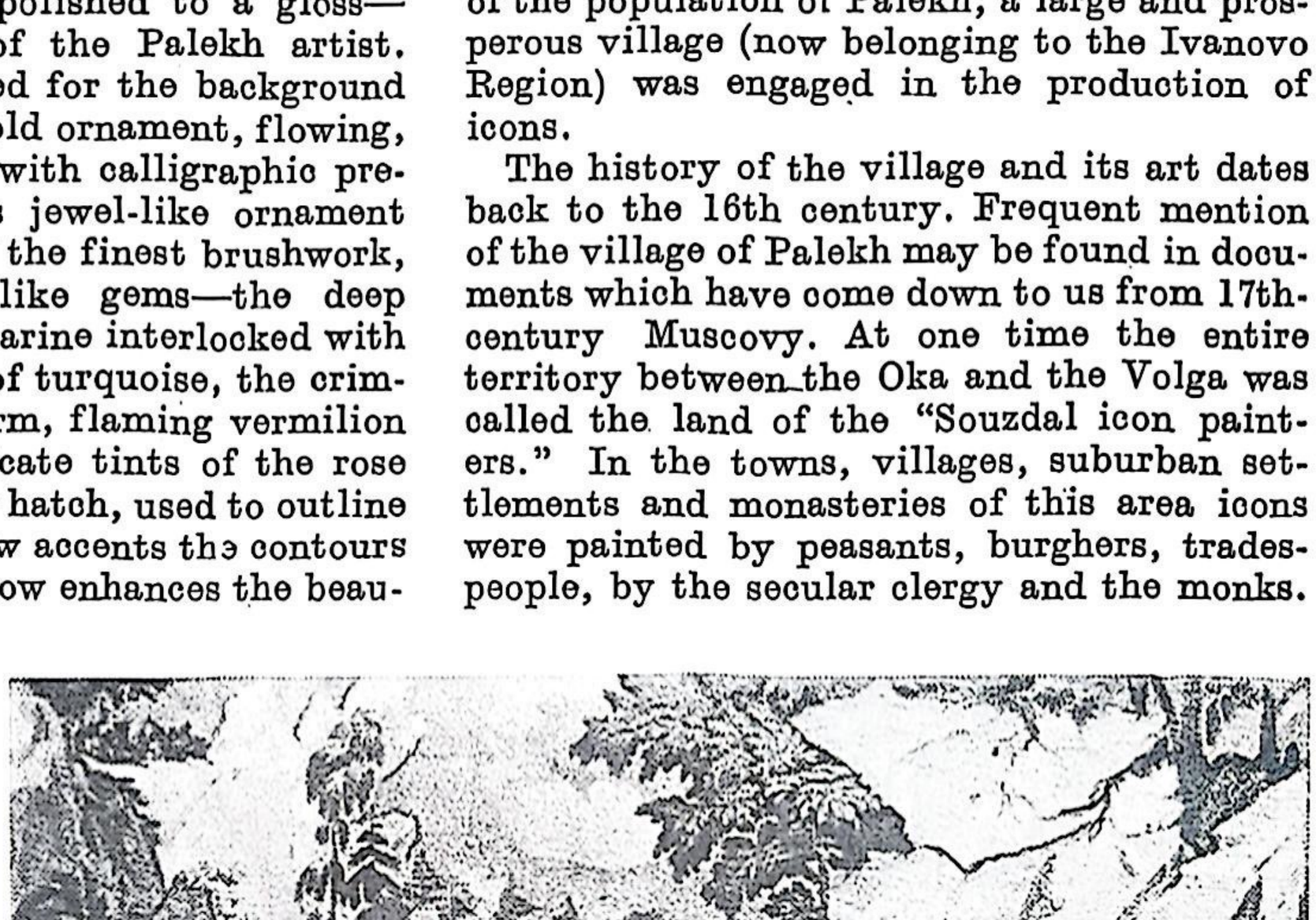
A small, exquisitely executed papier-mâché object, lacquered and polished to a gloss—such is the creation of the Palekh artist. Black, as a rule, is used for the background which is fringed by a gold ornament, flowing, dynamic and executed with calligraphic precision. Framed in this jewel-like ornament are miniature scenes of the finest brushwork, the colour gleaming like gems—the deep and cold blue of ultramarine interlocked with the pale greenish-blue of turquoise, the crimson of carmine and warm, flaming vermilion giving way to the delicate tints of the rose petal. A gold and silver hatch, used to outline the finished picture, now accents the contours and moulds the form, now enhances the beauty of the painting with the delicate metallic lacework of its design.

The principal genre of Palekh—the papier-mâché miniature—is brightly decorative, its technique rooted in ancient Russian art, its subject matter drawn mainly from peasant life, folklore and the works of the great Russian poets.

It was at an arts and crafts exhibition held in Moscow, in 1923, that samples of the new things the Palekh craftsmen were doing first appeared. They immediately attracted attention and received high awards. Shortly afterwards the works of the Palekh folk artists were exhibited abroad, and met at once with immediate success. Diplomas of honour presented at the exhibition in Venice in 1924, Grand Prix at two exhibitions in Paris, and the ever-growing requests for Palekh objects which come from museums, connoisseurs and art lovers the world over, point clearly to the success of Palekh art.

Before the Revolution nearly the whole of the population of Palekh, a large and prosperous village (now belonging to the Ivanovo Region) was engaged in the production of icons.

The history of the village and its art dates back to the 16th century. Frequent mention of the village of Palekh may be found in documents which have come down to us from 17th-century Muscovy. At one time the entire territory between the Oka and the Volga was called the land of the "Souzdal icon painters." In the towns, villages, suburban settlements and monasteries of this area icons were painted by peasants, burghers, tradespeople, by the secular clergy and the monks.



Ivan Bakanov

The Iron Flood

The icon painters worked in families, the tradition of the art passed on from father to son. Owing partly to the rapid development of secular painting in Russia and partly to the advent of schools of icon painting in the larger Russian towns, the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century saw a considerable diminution in the art of the icon painters of the Vladimir-Souzdal Region. The village of Palekh, however, was not only to remain in the 18th century unaffected by this decline, but was destined to see a period of short-lived but magnificent bloom. During that period the Palekh artists, partly under the influence of the Moscow 17th-century school of icon painting, evolved an individual style. Refinement of design, intricate composition, slender, elongated figures (after the type of the Stroganov school of the 17th century), rich but restrained colour schemes and finally a sombre dramatic pathos distinguishes the style of the Palekh art of that period.

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century realistic tendencies began steadily to penetrate the work of the Palekh artists. A striking example of this is the famous icon of *John the Baptist in the Wilderness* which belongs to the beginning of the 19th century. What sets the tone in this icon is not the figure of the Baptist nor the biblical story of his life but the typical Central Russian landscape with its leafy vegetation and realistic animal figures.

To the same period belongs an impressive series of Palekh frescoes bringing to a close the history of old Russian mural painting. In these frescoes the traditions of old Russian painting are organically united with the austere Empire style.

However, in the second quarter of the 19th century Palekh art too approaches its doom. The icons it now produces become dull, the colours fade, lose their lustre and grow dim. There is a falling off of realistic tendencies with stylization of the old canons gaining the upper hand. The middle of the century sees Palekh art fall into the hands of merchants who transform this wonderful source of folk art into a profit-making business to supply all Russia with "manufactured" icons. And the production of the Palekh craftsmen in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was a dull, awkward mixture of naturalism and the very old traditions of Russian icon painting, calculated to please "the tastes of the common consumer." Art was thus turned into a tedious craft. This is how Maxim Gorky in his novel *In the World* describes the joyless routine in a shop "manufacturing" icons. "Nobody is taken in by the icon painting; some efficient wretch has divided up the work into a long series of operations, devoid of beauty and incapable of inspiring love and interest in the work."

Though for many long years Palekh's craftsmen derived no creative joy whatever from their work, they nevertheless succeeded in retaining the high technical skill of their predecessors. It was their most treasured possession, cherished as a living legend from generation to generation and preserved up to the very time of the October Revolution.

A complete change in the life of Palekh was wrought by the Revolution. When icon painting as an industry became practically extinct it was clear that a rebirth of Palekh art would be possible only if the Palekh painters found a new outlet for their creative impulses, a new message and new content for their art. This was soon found. A passionate and persistent quest for the new, launched by a number of the artists, foremost among whom was Ivan Golikov, one of the most talented, led to the birth of a new genre hitherto untried in the village of Palekh—decorative painting of household articles, such as caskets, boxes, cigarette cases, etc., which the Palekh craftsmen began to produce in the early twenties.

The transition to a new genre was accompanied by many difficulties. It was not easy to pass from the painting of icons, frescoes, from large pictures to compositions of virtually microscopic size, to the presentation of big subjects on the small surfaces of household articles. This demanded a change in technique. It was, moreover, necessary to study the new material (papier-mâché in the main), formerly entirely unknown to the Palekh craftsmen, and to set about manufacturing it. The greatest difficulty, however, lay in the passage from the "conveyer-belt" production of icons, from copying for the thousandth time the faces of the Virgin and other holy personages, from the stereotypes of ecclesiastic painting to a free art with entirely new content and imagery.

It was in the work of Ivan Golikov, Ivan Bakanov, Nikolai Zinoviev, Ivan Markichev, Aristarch Dydykin that the transition was effected in a comparatively short time. Scores of other Palekh craftsmen who grouped round these leading artists and organized a cooperative, followed suit. In 1935 the Palekh cooperative was reorganized into the "Palekh Fellowship of Artists."

It is important to note that the Palekh artists received substantial material and moral aid from the Soviet government and from such leading figures in Soviet culture as Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar for Education, and Maxim Gorky who participated directly in the organization of the Palekh cooperative.

The subject matter of the Palekh miniatures of the twenties and thirties may, on the whole, be classed in three groups.

The heroics of unfettered Socialist labour, a leading motif in all folk art, became in a great variety of ways enshrined in the art of the Palekh masters. Harvest time, haymaking, fishing and hunting scenes, "troikas" in winter and summer settings provide the subjects for a multitude of Palekh miniatures. Simultaneously leisure and recreation were taken as subjects, as well as illustrations of old and contemporary folk songs. Scenes with round dances, outdoor games, characters from songs and folk tales may be found in the work of the majority of the Palekh artists. The romance of love and landscape come as a natural complement to the narrative element. To the same group of themes belong pictures recreating the heroes of legends and folklore. Here the emphasis on the ornamental and decorative is particularly

Illustration to Pushkin's Tale of Tsar Saltan — *I. Golikov*

strong and stresses the colourful fantasy of the subjects. Here you will see musicians playing old-time instruments, battles between knights in armour, hunting scenes with exotic boasts, fairy-tale forests and fantastic architecture.

Subjects drawn from literature constitute the second group of themes and occupy a prominent place in the art of the Palekh miniature. At first they are rather limited in scope and confined to Russian classics. It is interesting to note that the Palekh artists are attracted mostly by scenes and characters from the poets, as the latter are most congenial to their creative pattern, to the song element and the sharp rhythm of their painting.

Beyond doubt, Pushkin is the writer to whom the Palekh artists—those inclined to interpret scenes from literature—turn most often for subjects. Indeed, there is positively not a single Palekh artist, old or young, who did not at one time or another draw inspiration from Pushkin. In Pushkin's poetry there is that clarity, harmony, flow of rhythm and severity of pattern that agree so well with the Palekh artist's credo.

Lermontov and Nekrasov are two other poets whose works are popular with the Palekh artists. Of the modern writers, they feel closest to Maxim Gorky, attracted mainly by his romantic tales—*Story of the Falcon, The Song of the Storm Petrel, Old Woman Izerguil.*

Very important also is the third group of themes: the Revolution and its achievements. Already in 1925 the revolutionary theme began to penetrate into Palekh art, and for this too we are indebted to Ivan Golikov. In Palekh art of the twenties and thirties two methods of approach to the revolutionary theme were to be discerned. One was symbolic, presenting the subject matter in a sparse, conventional manner. And Palekh art, if we consider its principal features, lends itself particularly well to this approach. A sample of this kind of work is Ivan Golikov's *Brotherhood of Peoples* in which a worker, a peasant and a Red Army soldier hold out their hands to the oppressed peoples of the world. Dmitri Butorin who followed in Golikov's footsteps, in his *The Peoples of the U. S. S. R.* subordinated the realistic design to symbolic composition by making the nations of the U.S.S.R. form a wreath round the country's crest. No sooner had the picture appeared than the composition acquired great popularity and was reproduced many times.

The second approach—presenting the theme in the narrative manner—proved more difficult and developed more slowly. What it demanded, first of all, was a very concrete and realistically faithful rendering of the subject. It was necessary for the artist to get as broad a view of his surroundings as possible, to create a synthetic image, unencumbered by the incidental and transient and to fit it in with the lofty epic element which distinguishes Palekh art in general. Subjects presented in this manner deal, first of all, with the changes wrought by the Revolution in the life of the peasants and in political life. Such are the *Village Reading-Room,* by Ivan Bakanov, *Village Soviet Meeting* by Alexander Kotukhin, *Red Army Encounters Whites* by Markichev, *Horse Carts Delivering Grain to the State* by Zinoviev and many others.

Scenes of every-day life in the Soviet village are rendered in solemn, inspiring and romanticised manner. Thus in Ivan Zubkov's *Meeting the Tractor,* the "iron steed" appears against the background of the golden rays of the rising sun and *Reaping Time* by Ivan Markichev is depicted as a radiant feast of fertility.

New content, new interpretation of character, new materials and technique have led to a deep transformation in the traditional methods of Palekh art. In the twenties the Palekh artists strove to rid themselves of the clerical element and its artistic limitations, and to turn resolutely from conventional and idealized forms to realism, from abstract religious images to concrete individual portraits. But the poetic pattern of Palekh art is far removed from all naturalism. In their search for new forms, therefore, it was natural for the Palekh artists to turn to the fountainhead of their art, the period of its efflorescence—the close of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. These traditions, untainted by the later commercial flavour, were assimilated and reworked in accordance with the new esthetic demands of the Soviet period.

Before undertaking an estimate of the work of the leading Palekh artists, it is necessary to get some brief idea of the technique of the lacquer miniature on papier-mâché, a technique for which we are wholly indebted to the Palekh artists.

A series of specific operations each of which, from the simplest to the most intricate, is performed by the artist himself, go to make up this technique. The Palekh masters do not shun the most painstaking effort in preparing the technical accessories necessary for their painting. And it is this attitude which largely determines the high artistic quality of the Palekh miniatures.

The miniaturist starts by mixing the paints in an ordinary wooden spoon. In mixing an egg yolk is added which, by the way, was not done in Japan or Iran, both classic homes of the lacquer miniature.

Next, the papier-mâché surface, which is to serve as the base for the painting, is carefully smoothed and polished to a dull lustre. Then the artist makes a sketch outlining the figures and all the details of his composition. The base is formed by a light coat of white paint. Then comes the layer of black paint, and after it—the bright colours. Then comes the finest and most complicated filigree work of painting the faces, the landscape and the tiniest, sometimes truly microscopic details. The painting is then covered with varnish and fired. This is followed by what the Palekh artists themselves call their "most agonizing" task—the filling in of details in gold and silver. Gold leaf is mixed with gum arabic and water, allowed to settle and dry and then is applied with a very fine brush. Finally the whole thing is polished with a cow's tooth, again lacquered and put in the kiln. And only after all these delicate and complicated tasks are accomplished—and of these

only the principal stages are mentioned here—the miniature is ready.

In the work of the Palekh artists the creative impulse is combined with a love for the very fine skill that handicraft demands, a skill which imbues the texture itself with the spirit of poetry.

Ivan Bakanov, one of the oldest members of the Palekh cooperative (he died in 1936) was also one of its organizers. In him the old Palekh tradition found one of its best interpreters. Though imbued with an expert knowledge of the old traditions, he was among the first to turn to Soviet themes. What Bakanov painted covers a wide range of subjects: contemporary life (*Red Army Defends the Country*, *Industrialization of Agriculture*, etc.), lyric themes (*Lad Meets Girl*), epic song compositions (*Down Mother Volga, We Went a-Sowing, a-Sowing the Flax*), illustrations to classic and modern Soviet writers (particularly successful are his illustrations to Pushkin's *Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, *Tale of the Golden Cockerel*, and Serafimovich's *Iron Flood*). The history of Bakanov's art clearly shows the organic transition of the Palekh art to a new style. Easily one traces in his miniatures the path which takes him from the typical icon landscape—and landscape is his forte—to his native hillsides and river beaches. Decorative, exotic trees and grasses give way to typical Central Russian vegetation—birch, pine, fir. In this way one of Russia's venerable icon painters embraced a realistic interpretation of the world.

From a strictly artistic point of view the most outstanding feature of Bakanov is his colouring. He has mastered to perfection the ancient Russian method of applying paints in such a way as to create an illusion of transparency wherein one colour imperceptibly merges into another. His use of tone and shade, making hues of colour blend and dissolve, is truly remarkable.

Bakanov's works with their soft, serene lyricism, their delicate hues and tints, their flawless draughtsmanship, their restraint and simplicity best represent the "narrative style" of the Palekh miniature.

Completely different in character from Bakanov's art is that of another eminent Palekh craftsman—Ivan Golikov (he died in 1937). His miniatures give the impression of a mad whirl of dance. They are filled with swift, flowing rhythm and a pungent expressiveness of characters. Golikov displays a fondness for disproportionate planes, confusion of form, dramatic contrasts of flashing colours, intricate and sometimes unnatural foreshortenings. And his choice of subjects is made accordingly. In the realm of the epic he is attracted by scenes of prowess, in genre painting by "troikas" galloping at breakneck speed, in illustrations by Pushkin's *Demons*. In his numerous battle pictures there is a clash of monsters and dragons with long, snake-like necks and snarling jaws which play the part of horses. With their limbs, which are like steel springs attached to round joints, the dragons fling their fat top heavy bodies into an inextricable fray, in which the riders, their muscles strained to the utmost, twist slender, long lances, gleaming like silver, make a net-like criss-cross pattern, giving a peculiar harmony to this picture of frantic motion.

A strong sense of the emotional and the dramatic, extreme tension in representation are typical of each of Golikov's works. And it is not surprising that Golikov was one of the first to be carried away by romantics of revolution and perceive its far-reaching influences. This is best expressed in his *Brotherhood of the Peoples*, and several other works. Even his scenes with the dragons are intended as a symbolic interpretation of the "optimistic tragedy" of the Civil War.

An extremely original miniaturist, a splendid illustrator (apart from Pushkin he illustrated with great success *The Lay of Prince Igor's Host* Russia's great epic poem), Golikov also won distinction in the field of theatre design. Here his most noteworthy contribution was his sets for Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* produced by the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, an opera whose tragic pathos particularly appealed to him.

In Nikolai Zinoviev, despite the relative simplicity and clarity of his artistic methods, a feeling for fantasy is perhaps more strongly expressed than in any other Palekh artist. Proof of this is his *History of the Earth* series. In this work the principal stages in the history of our planet are depicted—the formation of the universe, the great geological periods: the Early Palaeozoic period with its flaming volcanoes, the vegetation and life of the Later Palaeozoic period. Particularly dramatic and convincing is his portrayal of the monstrous animals which inhabited the earth in that early period of its history. Then follows the story of how man appeared, and his fierce struggle with nature. Finally there is a brief sketch, in the symbolic manner, of the history of human culture condensed into the harmonions pattern of a single composition. In this last work—on the left of the picture—the history of husbandry from the time when the land was tilled with a mattock to the age of the tractor is given in general terms. On the right of the picture is a synthetic portrayal of Socialist construction—a train speeding out of a tunnel towards the ocean coast, dams of hydroelectric power stations, rows of factories topped by an iron-wrought network of cranes and the spire of the Moscow radio tower. Brotherhood of the peoples of the earth is the subject of the central piece in the composition.

United by a single decorative concept, the whole complicated series is presented on the eleven articles of a writing desk set. One may argue whether so immense a theme is suitable for such "applied art." One feels that for such a subject the walls of museums, of palaces of culture should be placed at the artist's disposal. At the same time, however, one is filled with admiration of the artist's decorative instinct, his way of handling the various forms and planes.

Today Zinoviev, heir to the art of Bakanov and Golikov, is head of the Palekh Fellowship of Artists. He is also director of the Museum of Palekh Art which was founded in 1934.

Ivan Markichev, a born fresco painter, is another of Palekh's veterans. In his work there is a strong tendency towards the terse, finite forms of monumental art, a tendency

which is rooted in antiquity, in the remote wellspring of ancient Russian art. In Markichev's miniatures elegance is wedded to a severe classical mould, and delicate filigree work to an impressive plastic strength. In his lyrical pictures (The *Accordeon*, *Gathering Mushrooms*), the artist achieves a pure and noble simplicity, both quiet and solemn.

It was natural for this artist to turn his attention to important historical subjects. Both in his early miniature—the *Peasant Rising*—and in his later works devoted to themes of the Great Patriotic War Markichev reproduces with a confident brush the epic spirit of great battles. Markichev's composition is close-knit and well balanced, and there is a steady, powerful rhythm to his work. His colours are vivid, put on with broad strokes.

And it is understandable why Markichev is gradually passing from the miniature to work that is more congenial—monumental frescoes and theatre settings (*The Reapers*, a mural executed in 1937, the sets for *Stepan Razin*, produced in a Leningrad theatre, etc.).

Landscape and song or, to be more exact, songs about nature is the particular genre to which Ivan Zubkov, one of the finest interpreters of the lyrical, devotes his art. Even in the work of Bakanov, who among Palekh artists is most strongly attracted by landscape—nature, to a considerable degree, serves as a background for the human figures. In Zubkov's work the landscape carries its own independent message to which everything else in the picture is subordinate. Zubkov's feeling for nature is one of delicate poetry, placid, unruffled joy. The artist contemplates rather than expounds. He likes to paint trim, slender trees with bushy crowns, the leaves bathed in a wealth of colour, from emerald green to the yellow-crimson hues of autumn with glittering threads of gold—"the forests clad in gold and red" as Pushkin wrote. Dwellings, mills, fences, barns, scenes of toil and recreation are usual appendages to the landscape.

Ivan Bakurov and Aristarch Dydykin, two other Palekh artists, are bound by creative affinity. In a new way they conciliate the decorative with the realistic. Their pattern is built around clashing colours, lines and planes, and they achieve particularly good results in works with a strong dramatic element. Such are Bakurov's illustrations to Pushkin's *Demons* and Gorky's *The Song of the Storm Petrel*, and Dydykin's paintings for Lermontov's *The Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov*.

The ornamental is Alexander Kotukhin's true element. He was the first to pose and begin working out the problem of the harmony of ornamental forms with the decorative concept. His ornaments are distinguished by remarkable grace, calligraphic distinctness of outline and a fine subtlety of colour. Kotukhin's peculiar style has reached its peak not so much in the miniature as in his paintings on porcelain and sketches for these paintings. Thus Kotukhin's work opened a new branch of the arts industry to the Palekh artists.

In speaking, even briefly, of the work of the Palekh artists of the older generation, the great service they rendered to their art by teaching it to the young generation must not be overlooked. It is to their credit that Palekh now boasts of a "middle" and "young" generations of artists. Among the latter first mention must be made of Pavel Bazhenov (who met his untimely death in the recent war). He was the gifted pupil of Bakanov and Golikov. Apart from his work in the field of miniature, Pavel Bazhenov was a scenic designer, a graphic artist, a cartoonist and finally, was one of the first to turn to easel painting.

Nikolai Pravdin who comes of an old Palekh family and was recently elected to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R., enjoys popularity as a brilliant master of the miniature portrait. In his narrative scenes he is extremely versatile. Pravdin's series of miniature illustrations to Nekrasov's works won him a Diploma of Honour at the Paris Fair in 1937. To the period of the Great Patriotic War belongs his *Dmitri Donskoy Takes the Oath of Allegiance*. At present, while combining creative work with extensive public activities, he is preparing a series of paintings with subjects drawn from the life of the Soviet village.

Today the Palekh Fellowship ofArtists numbers some hundred members, most of whom are talented and original artists. And they not only carry on, but are consistently developing the wonderful traditions of Russian folk art.

Within the last decade and a half particularly, all possible conditions were created for the further growth of Palekh art. An arts and crafts school was founded. Workshops, museums and libraries were built.

In reviewing the work of individual Palekh artists mention has already been made of the fact that apart from the miniature on papier-mâché, many work in other fields—theatre design, mural painting, book illustration and porcelain. Nor are these new fields to be regarded as incidental. This is, for example, what Ivan Bakanov, one of the organizers of the Fellowship writes: "Gradually, without uprooting the style of the miniature, we must pass from the small lacquer box to easel and mural painting." And the last ten years have seen the Palekh artist turn more and more often to the larger picture and in various ways make his entry into the pictorial art of the U.S.S.R. And to that art the Palekh craftsman brings his superb sense of the decorative, his exquisite mastery of colour, all the wealth of a fantasy nurtured by folklore, the magic beauty of an art cherished and lovingly passed on from generation to generation.

ALEXANDER KAMENSKY

NEWS AND VIEWS

LITERATURE

EVENING OF CZECH LITERATURE

A program devoted to Czech literature was held recently in Moscow under the joint auspices of the Central Foreign Literature Library and the Slav Committee of the U.S.S.R. The audience heard poetry and prose in Russian translation as well as a general talk on the development of letters in Czechoslovakia. The library also arranged an exhibition of Slavonic literature in Russian translation with displays of books by Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, Polish and Bulgarian authors.

The program was opened by Alexander Fadeyev, Secretary General of the Union of Soviet Writers, who spoke of the traditions of Czech literature and the affinity between Russian culture and that of the Slavonic peoples. Both, Fadeyev stressed, are close to the masses and are permeated with the spirit of freedom and lofty humanism.

Discussing mutual influence and ties with the West, Fadeyev noted that Russian literature in the 19th century, particularly after the time of the poet Zhukovsky, was no longer confronted with the problem of depending on the culture of the West. Russian literature had long since taken a worthy place in the world of letters. Nor did the problem of depending on the West confront Czech literature, particularly after Wrkhlitski. Western Europe, the speaker emphasized, has something to learn from the Slav peoples.

The audience accorded a hearty welcome to J. Glazarova, Czech authoress, who mentioned the great interest for Russian literature displayed in Czechoslovakia and the many Czech translations of the works of Soviet authors. Glazarova was gratified to find that this interest was mutual, as evidenced by the numerous translations of the writings of her compatriots in the Russian language.

The Czech writer then described in brief the reign of terror the Hitlerites had instituted during the occupation. The Nazis attempted to wipe out Czech culture. Among the victims of their brutalities are Julius Fučik, journalist and literary scholar, Joseph Čapek, brother of Karel Čapek, Vladislav Vančura, author of the novel, *Jan Margoul the Baker*, known as the Czech Don Quixote, and Joseph Hora, poet and translator of Russian poetry, Karl Polák, famous humourist, Jaroslav Kratohvil, well-known writer and active participant of the resistance movement, and many others. But Czech culture did not perish. The literary ranks of the older generation have been replenished by young writers who have come to the fore during the war and post-war years. Glazarova told her audience about Ivan Olbraht, a novelist with a flare for psychological character portrayal, Marie Majerová, authoress of several books on the struggle of the working class in Czechoslovakia, Anna-Marie Tilšova, Jan Drda, and Stanislav Neuman, the poet, many of whose verses are dedicated to the Soviet Union.

The program closed with the recitations of Czech verses and folk songs and excerpts from the writings of K. Čapek, A. Irasek and others, all in Russian translation.

LENINGRAD HOUSE OF THE WRITER

Leningrad's House of the Writer is more than just a club where authors can spend a pleasant evening.

A regular feature on its extensive program are meetings of the poetry, prose, drama and other sections where new works are read and analyzed and major problems of literature discussed. From time to time special evenings are arranged where poets and writers recite their latest works or debates are held on vital questions in literature. There is a special section in charge of some 200 young writers.

The House also sponsors lectures on problems of art, philosophy and esthetics. Joint meetings of writers with actors, painters, sportsmen, army and navy men are often held in the spacious hall with its beautiful marble colonnade.

The city's artists keep in close touch with the writers and are welcome guests at the House, which now and then holds art exhibitions on its premises. Not so long ago the works of Leningrad artists attracted a large number of visitors.

Among the interesting affairs held lately at the House should be mentioned the lecture delivered by Academician A. Joffe on the latest developments in physics, the talk delivered by producer Friedrich Ermler on the cinema festival at Cannes, the evening of young poets and the get-togethers with Moscow, Ukrainian and Belorussian writers and with veterans of the late war.

The House has a comfortable reading room and a well stocked library. On the premises there is a book stall where the latest works of Soviet and Western authors and rare books or magazines may be obtained.

The chess and billiard rooms are very popular.

On Sunday special children's matinées are arranged in which musicians, actors and puppets entertain their young audience. The House also has regular showings of Soviet and foreign films and concerts featuring Leningrad's finest actors, singers and musicians.

BIG PROGRAM FOR LENINGRAD PUBLISHING HOUSE

Large editions of the selected works of both Russian and foreign authors comprise a major part of the 1947 program mapped out by the Leningrad branch of the *State Literary Publishing House*.

The publishers are putting out in one volume the selected works of Aksakov, Chernyshevsky, Mamin-Sibiryak, Nikitin and other Russian 19th-century writers.

Now being prepared for the press is a one-volume collection of Shakespeare's works in Russian translation, edited by the noted Shakespeare scholars, Professors Alexei Smirnov, Mikhail Morozov, Alexander Anikst and Mikhail Alexeyev, corresponding member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. It will be printed in an edition of 100,000 copies.

A one-volume collection of Chinese stories edited by the well-known Soviet sinologist Academician Alexeyev is to be issued with drawings by Epifanov.

Collections of stories by Cervantes, Prosper Mérimée, Alphonse Daudet, Charles Dickens and O. Henry are scheduled for editions of 150,000 copies. Other translated works include Stern's *Tristam Shandy* and Prevost's *Manon Lescaut*. Publication of the complete works of Stendhal in 17 volumes is to be finished this year. The edition includes two volumes of letters.

The publishers are also undertaking to put out illustrated de luxe editions of separate works, among them Pushkin's *Poltava* and *The Captain's Daughter*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and Korolenko's *Blind Musician*.

Within two years the publication of the complete works of Maxim Gorky in 15 volumes is also to be finished.

One of the important items on the program is a special jubilee 10-volume edition of the writings of Vissarion Belinsky, famed Russian critic of the first half of the 19th century.

THEATRE

DEEP ARE THE ROOTS *ON MOSCOW STAGE*

It is an established tradition with Moscow theatres to bring to their audiences the best plays by contemporary Western playwrights. The finest plays from abroad find a responsive public in the Soviet Union. In the first post-war season John B. Priestley scored a success with his *An Inspector Calls*, while this year this honour is claimed by the American play *Deep Are the Roots*, produced by the Vakhtangov and Cinema Actor theatres.

The play by James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau won popularity with Soviet theatre-goers by its faithful portrayal and exposure of the race hatred and persecution of Negroes that still prevails in America.

The Soviet theatre-goer follows with sympathy the fate of Brett Charles, the demobilized Negro officer, son of an elderly servant of Senator Langdon, a rich southerner. Brett has fought courageously in the war against the fascists, earning four decorations for the part he played in defending the world from the menace of Hitlerism. On returning home from the army he feels that he is the equal of other citizens of the democratic nations. It seems to him that he, like any other man, has the right to dispose of his life as he sees fit. Brett considers it his duty to uphold the rights of his fellow men. He has faith in American democracy and all the greater is his disillusionment when he comes into conflict with the morals and order prevailing in the south. He had thought that the great upheavals caused by the war would affect the southern town where the Langdons live, that the ideas of equality and fraternal collaboration which inspired the nations in the struggle for peace and democracy would have penetrated into the stronghold of American reaction as well.

But Brett's attempts to claim the most elementary rights of man are regarded as an encroachment on the order sanctified by tradition and his attitude evokes the frenzied hatred of the enemies of democracy and progress. The finale of the play shows that America is not homogeneous and that there is a sharp line dividing the forces of reaction and the forces of progress and that this division lies in the hearts of people too. Brett who sets out to fight the power of the white masters, his mother, old religious Bela who feels in her heart God's wrath against the Langdons whom she had served faithfully all her life, Langdon's younger daughter Genevra and the writer How-

Deep Are the Roots.
Scene from Act I

ard Merrick know that they can no longer stay under the same roof with the Langdons in post-war America. But neither does Langdon remain in his home. He goes to join his friends, the Ku-Klux-Klan, Fighting Christians, Silver Shirts and other American fascists whom he is financing and who are keeping under cover waiting for the day when their services will be openly sought for by America's ruling classes.

The senator shouts: "They are armed and awaiting the day. They are ready to fight and kill. They have their arsenals. They have their guns. I have already given them money. I'll give them more money. I go to join my allies."

The authors of the play have laid bare the deep roots of American reaction. A proper interpretation of the social message of the play enabled producer A. Gabovich and the cast of the Vakhtangov Theatre to present a psychologically convincing drama. The part of Brett Charles is drawn with great restraint and force by Andrei Abrikosov. Maria Sinelnikova gives a splendid portrayal of Brett's mother and makes her one of the most dramatic characters in the play. Senator Langdon, as played by Joseph Tolchanov, is a forceful and convincing character. Igor Doronin exercises great tact and skill in delineating the character of Howard Merrick, the writer, who, in a way, is an observer and commentator on the conflict that breaks out in the Langdon household. Merrick is a sober and objective man whose conscience does not permit him merely to stand aloof from the conflict that is brewing. His honesty prompts him to break with the people who are the bulwark of reaction. For the present he merely protests against their actions but the actor shows how the wrath and indignation which are maturing in Merrick's mind will inevitably impel him to more active struggle against the forces of evil.

BALLET ON THEME OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

Flames of Paris, Boris Asafyev's ballet depicting events of the French Revolution, has once again been presented by the Bolshoi Theatre, after an interval of several years. The ballet was first produced in 1933, and at the time its realistic treatment of the theme without the traditional conventions of the ballet constituted a new trend in this genre. The plot is in the main built around the seizure of the Tuilleries in August 1792 and the chief hero is the people, the revolutionary populace of Paris and Marseilles.

The new production follows the lines of the initial performance. The title roles are taken by Olga Lepeshinskaya and Alexei Ermolayev who starred in the same parts fourteen years ago. At that time both were young debutants and now the public meets them as recognized masters. Lepeshinskaya's interpretation is infused with fine lyricism, while Ermolayev's dances are vigorous and expressive.

VOLGA THEATRE STAGES RIMSKY-KORSAKOV'S GOLDEN COCKEREL

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Golden Cockerel* is the latest addition to the repertoire of the opera house in Saratov, on the Volga, which includes more than twenty operas, ballets and light operas. The *Golden Cockerel* combines sharp satire with elements of the fairy tale. Of considerable interest in the new production are the sets done after sketches by the artist N. Parilov, who is a Palekh master. The inimitable art of the Palekh craftsmen is rooted in ancient Russian church painting and blends well with the fairy tale plot.

KHARKOV THEATRE PRODUCES HISTORICAL PLAY

A play carrying audiences back some nine centuries to the days of the Kiev Prince Yaroslav the Wise has been produced by the Taras Shevchenko Theatre in Kharkov, the Ukraine. Prince Yaroslav was an outstanding military leader of ancient Rus who united the various Slav principalities in the Kiev state. Ivan Kocherga, the playwright, presents Yaroslav as a gifted diplomat and statesman who was the author of "Russkaya Pravda", the first written code of laws in Russia.

Flames of Paris.
Scene from Act III

STANISLAVSKY'S SISTER WRITES MEMOIRS

Though much has been written about Constantine Stanislavsky, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre and author of the system of acting that bears his name, comparatively little is known about his childhood and youth. This gap is now being filled with memoirs written by his sister Zinaida, which describe the formative years in the life of one of the greatest personalities of the stage.

The house where Stanislavsky was born in the Taganka District of Moscow in 1863 has been preserved to this day. In 1871, when he was barely eight years old, the boy first appeared in home amateur theatricals. Zinaida describes in detail the games and improvised performances of "The Theatre for Ourselves" that the children organized. In these games young Constantine was invariably the leader, inventing new plots and taking the main parts. The parents encouraged the children's home-talent activities. In the country house where the family spent the summer months a special

C. Stanislavsky at the age of eleven

wooden shed was put up to house the children's theatre. When the family moved to a new home in Moscow the parents built a little annex for the children's theatre. This annex is still intact.

Of considerable interest is the diary young Constantine kept at the age of sixteen and seventeen which is quoted in the memoirs. It shows the serious approach of the youth to his favourite art, how children's games were replaced by regular amateur theatricals and how the young producer formed the "Alexeyev Circle" (Stanislavsky was his stage name; his real family name was Alexeyev). The next step was the setting up of the "Art and Literature Society" which was the forerunner in the organization of the Moscow Art Theatre.

CINEMA

CINDERELLA ON THE SCREEN

Cinderella produced by the Leningrad film studios, though based on the plot of the old fairy tale, bears only faint resemblance to the sentimental story we have known since childhood. As Evgeni Shwarts, author of the scenario says: "everyone can tell a fairy tale in his own way."

The action is laid in a fairy land ruled by a king who far from conforms to tradition. He is a shy man who places very little value on his "royal prerogatives." When he encounters evil, envy and cupidity, he tears the crown off his head and renounces his right to his kingdom. In the finale of the film when the fairy tale king takes leave of the audience he says: "And so friends, we have reached complete happiness. All are happy, except the old stepmother. But she has only herself to blame: connections may be all right but one has to have a bit of a conscience too! Should you be asked some day:—Let us see what you have to show—then no connections will make a foot small, a mind great or a heart noble."

The entire action of the film is permeated with a tinge of irony and the traditional good fairy, the stepmother, the Prince and Cinderella herself are presented in the light of a contemporary approach to moral problems. The stepmother combines the usual viciousness of the fairy-tale character with the realistic traits of a nagging philistine whose vocabulary is replete with the modern vernacular. The Prince is endowed with human and natural traits; he is a boy who likes ice cream and a game of hide-and-seek and he is swept off his feet by youth's impetuous love for Cinderella and stricken with grief when she disappears. Cinderella herself is not the traditional pitiful and meek servant of the fairy tale. She is agile and gay and has "golden hands" (clever hands). Directness and simplicity make the character poetic and attractive.

What adds to the merit of the film is a scintillating and witty dialogue. The sets and costumes are done after sketches by the theatrical artist and producer Nikolai Akimov. The sets carry a deliberate stamp of theatrical convention which imparts a sense of the unreal and fantastic to everything transpiring on the screen. The authors of the film resort to a daring and unexpected combination of styles—to moments of pathos realistic details are added, and the vein of romantic uplift is now and then "debunked" by some realistic touch or remark.

The part of Cinderella is played by Yanina Zheimo, well-known cinema actress, and the stepmother is Faina Ranevskaya, who gives a splendid portrayal of vicious greed and lust for power. But the honours go to Erast Garin who gives a meticulous and finely etched portrait of the king.

The music for the film by composer Antonio Spadavecchia is light, translucent and melo-

Still from the film
Cinderella

dious, and forms an organic part of the fairy tale, rather than merely illustrating the action.

Music is by the Leningrad Philharmonic orchestra conducted by Kurt Zanderling.

The author of the scenario and directors Nadezhda Kosheverova and Mikhail Shapiro have succeeded in creating a happy and poetic world of noble sentiments where good, industry and modesty predominate. Sharp and delicate irony and the use of realistic touches remove any traces of the didactic and make this film of interest not only to children but adults as well. *Cinderella* is somewhat reminiscent of the great traditions of Soviet productions of the *Commedia del Arte*.

FILM LIFE OF PLANTS

It was not so long since people thought that only poets could "see the grass grqwing" but today everyone can. That is the contribution of science and the art of cinematography. On the screen the mysterious and intricate world of nature is unfolded to the spectator by the popular scientific film *The Story of Plant Life*. The highly developed technique of the cinema has made it possible to reproduce the finest details of the processes of plant growth and development.

Seed may lie for a year without undergoing any change whatever, but given heat and water it will begin to sprout fast. The movie-goer sees how the tiny shoot persistently forces its way through the grains of soil and breaks out into the open, how the roots search for water and plant food. The screen catches the opening of the bud and the flowering of plants.

The film traces the entrancing travels of a drop of water and shows the process of plant respiration. It carries the spectator to gardens and meadows blanketed with flowers. The busy bee manages to visit as many as 4,000 flowers in the course of a single day, carrying pollen from one plant to another. Then the pollinated flowers bear seed. With the coming of autumn and the ripening of the fruit the cycle of plant life is completed.

The idea of this film is based on the book *The Life of Plants* by Klimenti Timiryazev, great Russian plant physiologist and Darwinist. In this book Timiryazev wrote seventy years ago: "Representatives of science, if they wish to enjoy the sympathy and support of society, must not forget that they are servants of society and that from time to time they have to report to the people. . . ."

Still from the film
Northern Korea

Still from the film
Northern Korea

In a way, this new film, produced with the aid of Soviet scientists, is an account Soviet science gives to the people. It shows millions of movie-goers how far science has been able to penetrate into the mysteries of plant life.

FILM ABOUT NORTHERN KOREA

Northern Korea, a film depicting present-day life in this ancient Far Eastern land, is the latest in the growing list of Soviet documentary films.

"Land of Morning Coolness," is the way Koreans describe their native country and indeed the coolness of a clear morning seems to emanate from the mountains shrouded in mist, the silhouettes of cryptomerias that seem to be etched in ink with the calm sea as their background, the waterfalls and crystal clear lakes.

The arduous labour of many generations converted the rocky arid lands into fertile fields and flourishing gardens shown on the screen.

For forty years Korea was under the heel of the Japanese who made it a jumping-off ground for aggression and forced her people to build war plants, strategic highways and concrete fortifications.

The film shows the liberation of the land. True to its pledge, the Soviet Government declared war on Japan. Shown on the screen are the events of August 1945, the offensive of the Soviet Army along the vast front, from the steppes of Mongolia to the Pacific coast. Within several days the picked Kwantung army was routed and it had to surrender. The Soviet land forces together with sailors of the Far Eastern Fleet stepped on the soil of Northern Korea. The Korean people enthusiastically welcomed their liberators. . . .

The camera shows us the new history of this ancient land in the making. Movie audiences are taken to the streets of Phenyang, the ancient capital of Korea, to the sessions of the Provisional People's Committee of Northern Korea, presided over by Kim-Ir-Sin, hero of the popular liberation movement. Major democratic reforms are being realized in the country: the holdings of Japanese and Korean landlords are being divided among the peasantry, the Soviet Army command turns over to the people the factories and mills which belonged to the Japanese. Intensive reconstruction takes place throughout Northern Korea.

Liberation from Japanese oppression gave a big stimulus to the development of Korean national culture. Hundreds of thousands of students flocked to schools where tuition is being given in their native language. New school buildings are rising. The cameramen snapped an elderly Korean peasant writing his first letters on a blackboard at a school for adults. In Phenyang the first people's university has been set up.

But Korea and her population are not united. Lofty mountains run along the 38th parallel dividing the land into Northern and Southern Korea. The film shows weary people making their way across mountain paths to the North. They tell of what is happening in Southern Korea, where victory over the Japanese brought little change in the people's life, where no democratic reforms are being effected.

As the camera is shifted back to Northern Korea on the screen flash scenes from the elections to the People's Committees held in November 1946. People dressed in their best garb come to the polls. The streets are filled with banners and streamers, the people rejoice in their newly-gained freedom and democracy.

FILMING THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

Cameramen are at work in the area of Stalingrad, in districts where the battle that turned the tide of World War II was fought. They have come to shoot a monumental film *The Battle of Stalingrad*.

For this screen story of the heroic defense of the Volga city and the rout of the Hitlerite armies, the film introduces a new genre in the cinema. It will be an artistic film based, however, strictly on actual events. The scenario has not a single imaginary character (there are more than 100 people in the film) and not a single invented situation.

Nikolai Virta, author of the scenario, started work in May 1946. He studied an immense amount of data—army orders, reports, communiqués and battle analyses—accumulated from the summer of 1942 to February 1943. The scenario incorporates only part of the material Virta gathered. The rest he will utilize for his future novel about the war and post-war years.

Many scenes for the film, which is to be directed by Vladimir Petrov, will be shot in the Don area. In Stalingrad proper a number of spots are being turned into temporary "preserves", where no rebuilding is to go on for the time being in order to retain the exact background of the battle of Stalingrad.

MUSIC

COMPOSITIONS FOR 800th ANNIVERSARY OF MOSCOW

The forthcoming 800th anniversary of Moscow this year has inspired a number of composers to write music dedicated to the Soviet capital. A monumental cantata entitled *Moscow* has been written by Vissarion Shebalin (Stalin prize winner, 1946). Marian Koval, Grigori Tikhomirov and Boris Alexandrov are also working on cantatas, while Boris Shekhter is writing a symphony and Alexander Mosolov an oratorio.

MOSCOW SCIENTISTS' SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Many Moscow music lovers owe their acquaintance with rarely performed compositions to this orchestra which avoids the beaten track of concert repertoires. Its members are not professional musicians but scientists; the only professional is the art director and conductor, Professor V. I. Sadovnikov.

The Scientists' Symphony Orchestra is one of the best known ensembles of amateur musicians in the country. Among its members are savants renowned in various fields. G. Kallish, Stalin Prize winner, of the Higher Technical School, plays the first violin. In the orchestra are Professor B. I. Prisheltsev, of the Moscow Geodesic Institute, Professor S. F. Vassiliev, aircraft specialist, Professor of Forensic Medicine A. D. Grigoryev, Professor V. A. Kara, expert on international affairs, and others.

During the twelve years of its existence the orchestra has rehearsed and performed a large number of works by West-European, Slav, Russian and Soviet composers. It usually plays at the Moscow House of the Scientist. The orchestra has also taken part in a number of countryside amateur art contests.

Before the war this orchestra presented Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons*, Liszt's music to *Prometheus Unbound* and Schumann's cantata *The Wandering Rose*.

This orchestra holds the distinction of being the first in the Soviet Union to perform Cherubini's C-Minor *Requiem* and Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneus*.

An *en frac* production of Purcell's opera was given jointly by the Scientists' Symphony Orchestra and Choir; the members of the latter are also employees of scientific institutes and higher educational establishments. The part of Dido was taken by A. Granovskaya, a chemist, and of Aeneus, by V. Marquardt, a research worker.

* * *

The first public rendition of Nikolai Myaskovsky's 25th Symphony at the Moscow Conservatory marked in a way a jubilee in the career of the veteran Russian composer. The latest symphony is a lyrico-philosophical work consisting of two slow movements and a finale in more energetic vein but elegiac in style. The symphony is remarkable for its sincerity of language, melodiousness and emotion.

Myaskovsky's recent works no longer bear traces of the modernistic style evident in his earlier music. The new symphony, like a number of other major compositions show him as a direct successor to the traditions of Chaikovsky and Taneyev.

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The second concert in the "History of Russian Music" cycle sponsored jointly by the State Central Museum of Musical Culture and the Moscow Philharmonic was dedicated to Alexander Alyabyev (1787-1851). This concert, like the first one which featured the works of Evstignei Fomin (1769-1800), disproves the common conception that Russian music before Glinka was written mainly by dilettanti. The compositions of both Alyabyev and Fomin show that the groundwork for the veritable revolution Glinka wrought in Russian music was laid by the fruitful activity of several generations of composers who were professional musicians and consciously strove to develop national elements in Russian music.

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The rendition of Arnold Bax's *First String Quartet* and Ernest Bloch's *Piano Quintet* at an evening of chamber music evoked great interest among Moscow music lovers. Bax's quartet written in 1918 is bright in its colouring and fresh in its thematic material but somewhat elegiac as a whole and with a marked French influence.

Bloch's quintet is a serious piece of music presented in stern colours with bold innovations in style and skillful use of the potentialities of the chamber ensemble.

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Svyatoslav Richter's recitals form one of the highlights of the current music season. Richter is fast gaining the reputation of one of the greatest pianists of the country. Last season he showed himself to be an impeccable interpreter of the classics (48 preludes and fugues by Bach, pieces by Haydn and Mozart) and early romantics (Schubert). This year his repertoire consists mainly of the works of Russian composers (particularly outstanding was his rendition of Chaikovsky's Grand Sonata and Scriabin's Fifth Sonata), Beethoven and the French impressionists. Phenomenal virtuosity, a dazzling colour pallette and ability to interpret any style are Richter's strong points.

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An unusual recital with father and son playing Bach's concerto for two violins was given recently when David Oistrakh, renowned Soviet violinist, appeared together with his fifteen-year-old son Igor, a student of the preparatory school at the Moscow Conservatory. The son inherited from his father his calm and strict style of interpretation, though, of course, his playing lacks professional polish. At the insistent demand of the audience father and son had to render an encore of the finale.

ARTS

MOSCOW SPRING ART EXHIBITION

For the first time since the war Moscow artists resumed the traditional exhibitions held every spring and autumn to display the latest efforts of painters and sculptors.

This spring show, like its pre-war predecessors, was marked by the great variety of exhibits and the large number of participants (250 works by 133 painters and 22 sculptors).

Regardless of genre, most of the items on display were imbued with the spirit of the times. Grigori Shegal's canvas *A Moment of Leisure (Nurse)* ably conveys the image of a simple Russian war nurse. The painter has succeeded in catching on canvas the type of war nurse that was produced by the epoch of the Patriotic War.

In the works of landscape artists one senses a profundity of emotions and ideas, a serious and thoughtful approach to problems of esthetics. An excellent landscape by Georgi Nissky, though portraying Belorussia's austere and bleak nature in the autumn, is filled with invigorating freshness and sincere joy of life.

Like the Russian collective farmers depicted in his canvases, Arkadi Plastov is not merely an aloof admirer of nature. He tries to delve into the essence of life and his *Flour Mill* is a convincing work of art not only by virtue of the unity of its composition with its silvery-grey tones but, first and foremost, by an unaffected and serious approach to life expressed with great purity and vividness.

In the works of Fyodor Shurpin there is often a concealed and intricate symbol and this is true of his latest effort, *May 9, 1945*. In the foreground is a heap of rubble, the remnants of anti-tank obstacles, overgrown by wild flowers. Beside it are the graves of several Soviet soldiers, while on the horizon the skyline of Moscow is lit up by the coloured rockets of the Victory salute.

An original contrast to Shurpin's somewhat rhetoric canvas is provided by the calm and restrained landscapes of Porfiri Krylov (one of the Kukryniksy trio). His small canvases *(Grey Day on the Oka, Evening, Crimea)* are reminiscent of aphorisms, so laconic, polished and finished are they. They combine determination and thoughtfulness and a rich colour palette with a sense of the material and a vigorous plasticity of painting. That is likewise true of the work of another member of the trio, Nikolai Sokolov *(October, Apple Tree)*. The third Kukryniksy, Mikhail Kuprianov, was represented by *Rain in Moscow*, finely executed, fresh and poetic sketches of autumn days in the capital.

The masters of the older generation of Soviet painters, Vassili Baksheyev, Nikolai Krymov, Alexander Kuprin, Constantine Yuon and others, contributed to the exhibition almost exclusively landscapes. As hitherto their works were a source of lofty esthetic pleasure to the public.

Among the genre canvases the most impressive was Olga Kolmakova's *Leave-Taking*. It carried us back to the autumn of 1941. A troop train had just left a Moscow railway station. Watching it disappear are parents, wives and children and all around them life goes on as usual: people rush to and fro, new trains arrive. The entire atmosphere is life-like and this enhances the significance and grandeur of the emotions portrayed.

Several fine portraits were displayed by painters and sculptors. A portrait of Joseph Stalin by Alexander Bubnov is remarkable for its fresh colours. Evgeni Vuchetich's portrait of Academician Speransky emphasizes the latter's strained concentrated face and passionate energy.

Andrei Goncharov had on display a fine portrait of the ballet dancer Sergei Koren, painted in the role of Mercutio *(Romeo and Juliet)*. In his composition Goncharov proceeds from the graphic style of Daumier. The sharp dynamic rhythm of the design and the unexpected clash of colours are admirably suited for this grotesque portrait in which likeness of features is intricately interwoven with theatrical fantasy and the spirit of carnival.

A humorous sculptural composition *Philistines*, the work of Sergei Orlov, is biting satire seldom to be encountered in sculpture. In the group of people engrossed in animated conversation Orlov has presented typical small town Babbits.

Among the best in the smaller plastics are the works of Isidor Frikh-Khara and Ivan Efimov. Their figures of animals are always charming in their sincerity and simplicity.

The main impression one carried away from the spring exhibition was that Soviet artists are extending their quest, seeking to portray contemporary life in all its diverse aspects.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE KUKRYNIKSY ARE TWENTY YEARS OLD

Twenty years have passed since the first cartoons signed with the unusual name of "Kukryniksy" first appeared in Soviet magazines. Right from the start the cartoons attracted attention both for their biting satire and inimitable style. Soon it became known that "Kukryniksy" was the collective pseudonym of three young artists, Mikhail Kupriyanov, Porfiri Krylov and Nikolai Sokolov. Their initials formed the unusual nom-de-plume.

Since then the three artists have been inseparable. Tall, stocky, athletic Kupriyanov is rarely seen without the short, volatile Krylov or elegant Sokolov with his mop of fair hair.

The trio have been working intensively

The Kukryniksy. (Right to left: KUprianov, KRYlov, NIK. Sokolov)

A drawing by G. Vereisky

throughout the past two decades and were they to arrange an exhibition of all they have produced, several large halls would be required. Thick folios hold more than 3,000 cartoons and drawings published in the 20-year period.

The attention of the visitor to the Kukryniksy studio will be caught by front-line sketches, anti-fascist cartoons, posters and leaflets dropped from aeroplanes behind the enemy lines. The artists fired their first "shot" against the German invaders on the very first day of the war. On June 23 their first wartime poster was displayed all over Moscow and was sent to other cities. Moscovites still remember this poster with Hitler's fiendish features and his greedy hands reaching out for the Soviet Union and the bayonet thrust at him by the Soviet soldier. During the war the Kukryniksy produced more than two hundred of these posters.

But cartoons and posters claim only part of the creative efforts of the trio. The Kukryniksy are known too for their illustrations to the works of Gorky, Chekhov and Ilf and Petrov.

The artists also work a great deal, singly or collectively on landscapes and larger canvases. One of their best known wartime works is the painting depicting the hanging of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the intrepid girl guerrilla. The large canvas is most striking with its snow-swept fields, white cottage roofs, dark figures of peasants with their heads bent low and a mob of Hitlerites swarming around a hastily built gallows. . . One of the Nazis holds up a ready noose. Under the gallows stands the tortured girl with her beautiful face proudly uplifted.

Amidst the paintings, posters and sketches there is one photograph—the Kukryniksy photographed beside a heavy KV tank. This was their gift to the Soviet Army. In 1942 the Kukryniksy, the poets Nikolai Tikhonov, Samuil Marshak, Victor Gusev and Sergei Mikhalkov were awarded Stalin Prizes and they used the prize money to order a heavy tank. It was named the *Relentless* and before dispatching it to the front the Kukryniksy painted anti-fascist cartoons all over its armour.

The Kukryniksy throughout the war years time and again drew cartoons of the fascist "leaders". They worked, so to speak, in the dark, having to resort to photographs. But victory gave them the chance to see the objects of their cartoons in person. That was at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg where Göring, Hess, Ribbentrop and the other main fascist criminals sat in the prisoners' dock. The Kukryniksy recorded for posterity the repulsive features of the Nazi criminals as they made their last desperate attempts to evade the avenging hand of justice.

At present the Kukryniksy are working on illustrations for Don Quixote, reliving the adventures and tribulations of the "knight of the pale countenance," and next in line is Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*. And, of course, the trio never stops work on cartoons.

EXCAVATIONS IN THE CRIMEA

A number of ancient buildings and art memorials have been found in the course of excavations now being conducted at the site of Neapolis, ancient Scythian capital, near Simferopol in the Crimea.

A large monumental building with big cellars hewed in rock has been unearthed. Next to the building is a courtyard with pits for storing grain. At the southern outskirts of the ancient town are the remains of a fortress wall made of huge stone blocks. In places the wall is eight metres thick.

A stone mausoleum in which Scythian nobles were buried, has been discovered. Judging by the many weapons found in one of the tombs the person buried in it must have been a prominent warrior. His clothes were embroidered with golden stars, lions and shields. The mausoleum also contained Greek and Scythian vessels, beads and various gold objects. Of considerable interest are the paintings on the walls found in caves hewn into rocks.

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